

**Defining moment**  
Actor Kriti Sanon reflects on the film that strengthened her belief in herself  
LEISURE | P2

**No relief to Oli**  
Nepal's Supreme Court refuses interim relief to ex-PM KP Sharma Oli, arrested over Gen Z movement crackdown  
INTERNATIONAL | P10

**India bonds plunge**  
Indian bonds tumble in the fiscal year ending March, snapping a two-year rising streak  
BUSINESS | P11

**Fitting tribute**  
Sheetal Devi earns Para Archer of the Year 2025 honour, further cementing her legacy after clinching a historic world championship  
SPORTS | P12



**ISRAEL UNDER FIRE:** A blaze after Israel's Fire and Rescue Service said that an industrial building and a fuel tanker at Israel's Oil Refineries were hit by debris from an intercepted Iranian missile, amid the U.S.-Israel conflict with Iran in Haifa, Israel, Monday  
REUTERS

## US to hit Iran's civil infra if deals aren't sealed soon

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
**Dubai, March 30:** US President Donald Trump Monday threatened widespread destruction of Iran's energy resources and other vital infrastructure if a deal to end the war with Tehran is not reached soon.  
In a social media post, Trump said "great progress is being made" in talks with Iran to end military operations but bristled that if a deal is not reached and if the strategic Hormuz Strait is not immediately reopened, the US would broaden its offensive by "completely obliterating all of their Electric Generating Plants, Oil Wells and Kharg starting Monday as "a sign of respect." At the same time, with 2,500 US Marines now in the region and a similarly sized contingent on its way, he raised the idea of taking Iran's Kharg Island. "Maybe we take Kharg Island, maybe we don't," he told the Financial Times in an interview published early Monday. "We have a lot of options," he added.



On the ground, the war showed no sign of letting up: Tehran struck a key water and electrical plant in Kuwait, and an oil refinery in Israel came under attack. Israel and the US launched a new wave of strikes on Iran.

## TRUMP MULLS SEIZING KHARG ISLAND

**Dubai:** US President Donald Trump openly mused about seizing Iran's Kharg Island oil terminal in the Persian Gulf. As a diplomatic effort being facilitated by Pakistan toward ending the war moved ahead, Trump said Iran had agreed to allow 20 oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz starting Monday as "a sign of respect." At the same time, with 2,500 US Marines now in the region and a similarly sized contingent on its way, he raised the idea of taking Iran's Kharg Island. "Maybe we take Kharg Island, maybe we don't," he told the Financial Times in an interview published early Monday. "We have a lot of options," he added.

**16TH CENSUS**  
**Individual data to remain confidential**  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** The Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, Monday asked people to provide accurate information to census enumerators, asserting that individual data will remain confidential and cannot be used as evidence or to obtain any benefit under any scheme.  
Addressing a press conference, as the first phase of the country's 16th Census is all set to begin in April in some states, including Delhi, the commissioner said that under Section 15 of the Census Act, all individual data remains confidential.  
"All individual data collected during the exercise remains confidential. It cannot be shared with any organisation, be it government or private, under the Right to Information Act, or used as evidence in a court," Narayan said.  
Only statistical aggregate data will be used for tabulation purposes, he added.  
Asked about caste being included in the Census and the apprehension that people may not furnish correct information, Narayan said the data related to caste will be collected during the second phase, and the questions will be decided after exhaustive discussions.  
"There are many suggestions on how to collect caste information. All those will be considered, and the best will be put forth before finalising questions," he said.

## ₹ breaches 95-level

*With no signs of de-escalation in the Middle East conflict, investors are increasingly shifting funds into the US dollar, drawn by its safe-haven appeal. At the same time, rising oil prices are inflating India's import bill and boosting demand for dollars, putting pressure on the Indian rupee. Following Monday's all-time intra-day low of 95.22, the Indian currency depreciated 9.88 per cent against the US dollar in FY26, marking the sharpest decline in 14 years. Ongoing capital outflows, coupled with a widening trade deficit, are further intensifying depreciation pressures on the Rupee*



**Mumbai, March 30:** The rupee breached the 95/USD-mark in intra-day trade Monday before regaining some lost ground to settle at 94.70 against the US dollar, up 15 paise, after Iran war escalation jolted global markets, fuelling rupee volatility and risk-off sentiment.  
Forex traders said the USD/INR pair witnessed high volatility and swung 165 paise during intra-day trade as the West Asia crisis entered the 31st day keeping energy markets nervous.  
At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 93.62 and then gained further ground to 93.57 against the US dollar, registering a gain of 128

paise from its previous close, after the Reserve Bank brought down the net open position that banks can keep overnight at USD 100 million.  
However, it failed to sustain the momentum and fell to an all-time intra-day low of 95.22 against the American currency.  
At the end of Monday's trading session, the rupee was quoted at 94.70, higher by 15 paise from its previous close of 94.85 against the greenback.  
"At the core of this weakness is the global backdrop. Hopes of de-escalation between the US and Iran faded, bringing back risk aversion. And when uncertainty rises, markets naturally shift towards safer assets strengthening the dollar and weakening emerging market currencies like the rupee," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said.

**₹18.60L-cr wealth wiped out in 2 days**  
**NEW DELHI:** Equity investors have become poorer by ₹18.60 lakh crore in two days of sharp decline in the stock market, where the BSE benchmark Sensex has plunged over 4 per cent, as the West Asia conflict refuses to die down leading to a steep surge in crude oil prices. Weak global trends and unabated foreign fund outflows have also rattled investors' confidence. In the last two trading sessions, the BSE benchmark Sensex has lost 3,325.9 points, or 4.41 per cent. On Monday, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled 1,635.67 points, or 2.22 per cent, to settle at 71,947.55. **P11**

## BIJU REMARK ROW Dubey mentally unstable: Naveen

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** BJD president Naveen Patnaik Monday said BJD MP Nishikant Dubey needs to consult a "mental doctor" for making "outrageous" remarks against freedom fighter and former Odisha CM Biju Patnaik.  
Condemning Dubey's comments, the BJD chief said, "I think the BJD MP needs some mental doctor's attention for saying these outrageous things."  
Dubey, in a statement March 27, had claimed that Biju Patnaik was the link between former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the CIA during the war against China in the 1960s.  
As the issue snowballed into a major controversy with BJD MPs staging a walkout from the Rajya Sabha Monday, alleging "disrespectful and defamatory" remarks made by Dubey against Biju Patnaik, the BJD lawmaker in a post on X clarified that he made the statement while exposing the "misdeeds of the Congress and not Biju Patnaik."  
Earlier in the day, the BJD president told reporters outside the Assembly, "I am surprised at Dubey's outrageous remarks. I do not think that Nehru had set up an office next to his in Delhi,

while Biju Babu was still the chief minister of Odisha, to carry out tactics and fight the Chinese." Going down memory lane, he said, "I was very young at that time, about 13 years old, and I remember how furious Biju Babu was about the Chinese attack and how much he did to repel it."  
At least four other MPs -- Manas Mangaraj, Subhasish Khuntia, Muzibulla Khan and Niranjan Bishi -- criticised the BJD MP and accused him of "insulting the pride of Odisha".  
BJD senior vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra demanded an apology from Dubey for making such "insulting" remarks against a "patriot". BJD MP Bibhu Prasad Tarai said, "There should be no doubt that Biju Patnaik was an icon. Dubey was presenting some old documents. The history should be reviewed in this case also."  
BJP leader and newly elected Rajya Sabha MP Dilip Ray, in a post on X, said, "Biju Babu was not merely a towering leader of Odisha, but one of the rare nation-builders." "One may debate history, governments, or decisions taken in complex and difficult times - but no one has the right to question Biju Babu's nationalist spirit, his integrity, or his unwavering commitment to India."

## Spain closes airspace for US war planes



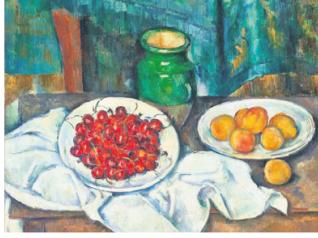
**Madrid, March 30:** Spain has closed its airspace to US planes involved in the Iran war, the defence minister said Monday, marking another step in the government's opposition to US and Israeli involvement in the conflict in the Middle East.  
The country had already said the US couldn't use jointly operated military bases in the Iran conflict, which Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has described as illegal, reckless and unjust. Defence Minister Margarita Robles Monday said the same logic applied to the use of Spanish airspace in the conflict.  
"This was made perfectly clear to the American military and forces from the very beginning. Therefore, neither the bases are authorised, nor, of course, is the use of Spanish airspace authorised for any actions related to the war in Iran," Robles told reporters.

## Iran: US hit Delhi-bound humanitarian aid flight

**NEW DELHI:** A US airstrike at Iran's Mashhad airport Monday damaged a Mahan Air aircraft, potentially disrupting a mission to India to collect humanitarian aid, Iranian officials claimed.  
The plane was reportedly scheduled to fly to New Delhi this week to pick up essential medical supplies and aid for Iranian people, they said.  
US officials have not yet corroborated the claim.  
The Iranian officials said the aircraft was damaged following the US attack on Mashhad airport.  
According to reports, the plane was expected to arrive in New Delhi on April 1.

## Renoir, Cezanne & Matisse works stolen

**MILAN -** Three paintings by French masters Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul Cezanne and Henri Matisse, reportedly worth an estimated \$10 million in total, have been stolen from a museum in northern Italy, police said Monday.  
Four masked men entered the villa of the Magnani Rocca Foundation, near Parma in northern Italy, and made off with the artworks overnight March 22 into 23, a police spokesman told AFP, confirming a report on the Rai television network.  
Thieves broke into the building's main entrance and took Cezanne's "Tasse et Plat de Cerises" (Cup and plate of



cherries), Renoir's "Les Poissons" (The fish) and Matisse's "Odalisque sur la Terrasse" (Odalisque on the terrace), the police added.  
The thieves forced the entrance door to get into a room on the first floor before escaping across the museum gardens.

The whole operation took less than three minutes and was structured and organised, the museum told broadcaster SkyTG24.  
They had not been able to go any further thanks to the surveillance system and rapid intervention of police and security officers, the museum added.

Police are looking at the museum's video-surveillance footage and that of neighbouring businesses, said a police spokesman.  
The Magnani Rocca Foundation 20km from Parma hosts the collection of art historian Luigi Magnani, which also includes works by Durer, Rubens, Van Dyck, Goya and Monet.  
The theft is the latest in a series of robberies targeting major museums in Europe.  
Last October, thieves broke into the world-famous Louvre museum in Paris in broad daylight, escaping in less than eight minutes with jewellery worth US\$102 million. **AFP**

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**

**I have faith in my work, but I have more faith in Ec's work**

# leisure



### THURMAN REVEALS WHAT DRIVES HER ROLE CHOICES

Uma Thurman, star of *Pretty Lethal*, says she prefers exploring the human motivations behind every character she plays. The 55-year-old actor believes people are rarely purely good or bad. Instead, she focuses on understanding their core motivations and emotional truths to portray them as complex, real individuals

### CURRY TALKS ABOUT HIS CAREER REGRETS

Tim Curry recently revealed one of his biggest career regrets: missing the chance to audition for Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*. The 79-year-old actor, known for iconic roles like Dr. Frank-N-Furter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and Pennywise in *It*, said agent issues prevented the opportunity



## FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

### ARIES

You may want to meet up with friends you haven't met in a long time, and the stars indicate that you will have great fun. Your enthusiasm will add a glow to whatever you do. Your sincerity in approach is what makes it special, says Ganesha.

### TAURUS

You will focus on nurturing the positive aspects of your life today, says Ganesha. You might exhaust yourself mentally trying to set things straight. It would be better to brainstorm with someone close to you or approach people whom you have differences with. The nitty-gritty is fine, but do not forget the larger picture, suggests Ganesha.

### GEMINI

Routine work bores you, and today you will go all out to break free from the shackles of boredom. The results, however, may not be as dramatic. You will have to depend on your children, if any, to rescue you from the tyranny of routine. Monetary gains can be expected either in the form of inheritance of ancestral property or as increment in your basic salary.

### CANCER

You may feel like flaunting your so-called superior social and financial status today. Chances are that all that gas about how successful you are may end up exploding in your face, and you may end up spending a lot more than you would have liked.

### LEO

If it's a fresh start that you are looking for, then this day promises to give you just that, predicts Ganesha. If you have chalked out plans for your future, today you may go ahead and implement some. Remember that rushing blindly into anything is not the solution; it is always the slow and steady who wins the race. Consider executing your ideas in phases, advises Ganesha.

### VIRGO

Today, your power and finance will be greater than ever before, says Ganesha. You will also be inclined to make monetary provisions for any future economic instability that may arise. The people around you will stand up and take notice of the leader in you. A word of caution from Ganesha: There may be unprecedented fluctuations in financial transactions.

### LIBRA

Today promises to be a busy day that will keep you occupied. You may also engage in written correspondence to re-establish some old contacts. Ganesha doesn't rule out optimum use of the phone for this purpose. When it comes to the work front, Ganesha predicts you will be asked to bring order to the workplace.

### SCORPIO

You might find your spirit sagging as worries cloud your thinking. Small things might probably bother you in a big way. Do not let them bog you down as life is all about mind over matter. As the day progresses, things will begin to look up. Take a break from the rigmarole if stress begins to take a toll on you, advises Ganesha.

### SAGITTARIUS

Watch out for Cupid's arrow today, warns Ganesha. Love will strike and strike hard. Alternatively, you may also find yourself in an argument with a loved one that ought to have been avoided. An evening of romance beckons... keep the roses ready and the carpet rolled to heal any bruises you might have caused.

### CAPRICORN

You may be attentive, as much as an eagle is while chasing its prey, but you still need to be careful when signing any important legal documents, advises Ganesha. Brokers and dealers, especially, are likely to incur heavy losses unless they take necessary precautions to avert misfortune.

### AQUARIUS

Today, you're up against those who want to get back at you. But not for nothing are you the king! Ganesha says you needn't worry, as few can match your prowess. Amid all the hullabaloo, your spouse will be a supportive presence.

### PISCES

Within adversity, lie the lessons of success; avoid having to resort to that philosophy by implementing your plans, if they are well thought out, in a phased manner. This will help you achieve your targets, says Ganesha.

# Kriti's career turning point

**Mumbai:** Kriti Sanon has steadily carved a place for herself as one of the country's most versatile actors, but she considers *Mimi* a defining turning point in her career. Reflecting on the film in a recent interview, Kriti shared that the project transformed her perspective as a performer and strengthened her belief in her own abilities.

Calling it a pivotal moment, she said the film gave her the confidence to trust herself more and take on challenging roles. "It allowed me to soar as an actor. It made me realise that I can do much more than I initially thought, as long as I believe in myself," she explained.

However, choosing the role was not easy. Kriti revealed that several people discouraged her from taking on a story centred around surrogacy. Many warned that playing a mother early in her career might typecast her or make her appear older, while others feared the subject might be too niche for mainstream audiences.

Despite the doubts, Kriti followed her instincts. She described herself as a "driven actor" who enjoys pushing boundaries and exploring meaningful stories. For her, the film's blend of humour and emotion made the message more impactful.

Meanwhile, excitement is building around her upcoming film *Cocktail 2*, with fans eagerly awaiting her next big performance.

AGENCIES



## NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL - DAY IV



Artists of Exposure from Jharkhand staged Hindi play *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya O Janmayai Nai* on the fourth evening of the 5-day Purva Ranga at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Monday. Written by Asghar Wajahat, the 1 hour 45 minutes play was directed by Sanjay Kumar Lal. The festival is being organised by Department of Odia Language, Literature & Culture, Govt. of Odisha, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi in collaboration with Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (Kolkata), Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India.

## Sonam, Anand embrace parenthood again

**Mumbai:** Actress Sonam Kapoor has embraced motherhood for the second time. She welcomed her second son with husband Anand Ahuja.

Sharing the exciting news on social media, Sonam wrote on the Insta handle, "With immense gratitude and hearts full of love, we are delighted to announce the arrival of our baby boy on the 29th of March 2026. Our family has grown and with his arrival, our hearts have expanded in the most beautiful way. (sic)"

The *Raanjhanaa* actress revealed that Vayu is extremely thrilled to be an elder brother.

"Vayu is overjoyed to welcome his little brother and we feel deeply blessed by this precious new life who has filled our home with happiness and grace", she further wrote. "Sonam and Anand are grateful to begin this beautiful new chapter as a family of four," the post concluded.

Soon after the announcement was made, congratulatory messages started pouring in for the couple.

Kareena Kapoor wrote, "Congratulations Sonam and Anand".

Maasi Rhea Kapoor reacted to the post with several heart-eyed emojis.

Sonam's uncle, Sanjay Kapoor, also shared red heart and evil eye emojis.

Dia Mirza and Huma Qureshi dropped red heart emojis in the comment section.

Refreshing your memory, Sonam announced her second pregnancy back in November this year.

IANS



# Sayani ventures into production

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Sayani Gupta, who has turned producer with her upcoming short film *Aasmani*, has shared what she is focussing on as a producer.

After spending over a decade working across films and streaming, the actress says the shift towards production comes from a growing need to be more involved in storytelling from the ground up.

Talking about the same, the actress said, "It has been a long dream. I've been wanting to tell a certain kind of stories and the idea is to be able

to create an enabling space for collaboration. We will go slowly but steadily, concentrating on one film at a time".

She further mentioned, "For us the quality of writing, craft, storytelling will always take precedence, and for that to happen, the right kind of time, care and attention needs to be given to every project".

*Aasmani* is the first production from Sayani Gupta Movies. It stars Revathy along with Daria Bedi and Abhay Kaul, has been written, directed and produced by Sayani. While she has earlier co-produced projects like *Where the Winds Blow* and *Upar Neeche*, and various short films like *Dear Men & Oscar* qualifying *Shameless*, *Aasmani* is her first full blown production.



## PEANUTS



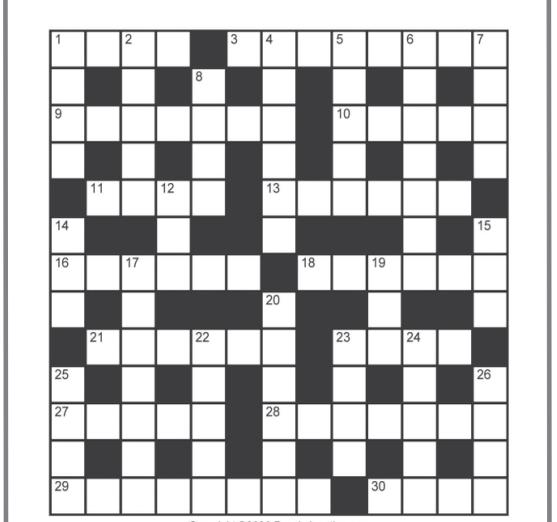
## CALVIN AND HOBBS



## BREVITY



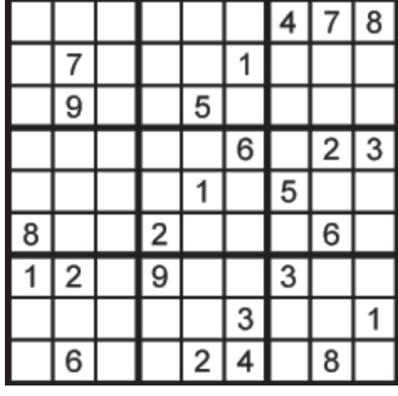
## CROSSWORD



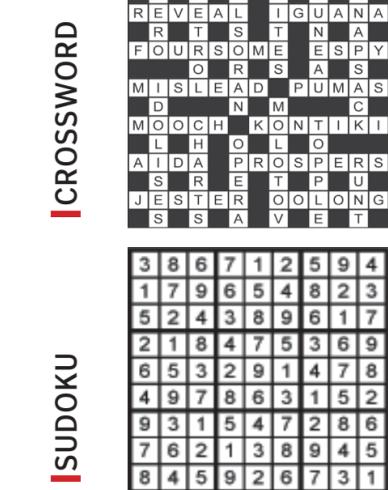
- Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Egg on
  - 3 Cone bearer (4,4)
  - 9 Repressed
  - 10 Office stations
  - 11 Capital on a fjord
  - 13 Mythical winged creature
  - 16 Enigma
  - 18 Gives way
  - 21 Old World lizards
  - 23 Hamburg's river
  - 27 Like helium
  - 28 Reykjavik's home
  - 29 Outmoded
  - 30 Nile reptiles
  - 12 Young fellow
  - 14 Smeltery input
  - 15 Fire residue
  - 17 Get sidetracked
  - 19 Jellied delicacy
  - 20 Help out
  - 22 Traveler's stop
  - 23 Fencing sword
  - 24 Big hogs
  - 25 Car with a bar
  - 26 Bookie's quote
- Down**
- 1 Burst of wind
  - 2 Out of whack
  - 4 Deep blue
  - 5 Pond denizen
  - 6 Perfume ingredient (4,3)
  - 7 "Duck soup!"
  - 8 Bread spread

## SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



## SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



WORTH A CAPTURE: A man walks past shikaras holding an umbrella during rainfall at Dal Lake, in Srinagar, Monday

PTI PHOTO

## 7.68L REMOVED FROM VOTER LIST

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** Names of 7.68 lakh voters in Odisha have been deleted from the electoral roll for various reasons between June 2025 and March 22 this year, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi told the Assembly Monday.

Replying to a written question from BJD legislator Ranendra Pratap Swain, the Chief Minister said that the names of 2,03,396 deceased persons were removed from the electoral roll during the period.

Similarly, the names of 4,08,132 voters were deleted due to transfer, while 1,54,318 voters were removed as their names appeared in more than one place, he added.

"Besides this, the names of another 2,646 voters were deleted from the electoral roll due to other reasons," the Chief Minister said.

Majhi also said that 5,67,034 people have applied to get themselves enrolled in the voter list during the period.

Notably, the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will commence across Odisha from April 1. According to the Election Commission of India, the revision exercise is aimed at updating and streamlining the electoral rolls in preparation for forthcoming electoral processes, with a focus on improving accuracy and integrity.



5,67,034 people have applied to get themselves enrolled in the voter list between June 2025 and March 22 this year

MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI | CHIEF MINISTER

**In 2 years, 1,399 incidents of attack, misbehaviour towards govt officials**  
A total of 1,399 incidents of attack on government officials and misbehaviour towards them were reported in various districts of the state during the last two years, the Chief Minister told the Assembly.

In a written reply to a question by BJD legislator Prasanna Acharya, Majhi said 632 such incidents were reported during the financial year 2024-25, while the number increased to 767 in 2025-26.

During the two-year period, 157 such incidents were reported from Balasore district, followed by Mayurbhanj (99), Puri (98), Cuttack (91), Bolangir (86) and Jajpur (65), the CM said.

The Odisha Police arrested at least 1,318 people in connection with the cases, he added.

## Indian Navy staff kills woman, dismembers body

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Visakhapatnam, March 30:** An Indian Navy staff allegedly murdered a 28-year-old woman, dismembered her body, and attempted to destroy evidence in Gajuwaka area here, a police official said Monday.

According to the police, the accused procured a knife online, dismembered the body, stored some parts in a refrigerator, and burnt the head and hands at a vacant place near Adavivaram Sunday.

The accused, identified as Chintada Ravindra, posted at INS Dega, had been in contact with the deceased Polipalli Mounika since 2021 after meeting her through a dating application, police said.

"A Navy staff (Ravindra) Sunday killed Mounika at his residence following an altercation and later dismembered the body, disposed of the parts at different locations," the official told PTI. The two developed a relationship over time and frequently met at various locations across Visakhapatnam, such as parks and theatres, police said.

According to the accused, the woman had allegedly taken Rs 3.5 lakh from him and threatened to reveal their relationship to his wife, leading to frequent disputes between them, the official said.

On the day of the incident, the accused allegedly called her to his flat, where a heated argument broke out before he smothered her to death, the official added.

## Bengal woman gangraped in City; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** A woman from West Bengal was allegedly gangraped in Ranasingpur area under Tamando police limits here late Friday night, police said, adding that two men were arrested Monday in connection with the incident.

"Narayana Swain, 31, and Bichitra Sahoo, 34, both residents

of Nayagarh and ambulance drivers by profession, have been taken into custody based on a complaint lodged by a woman from West Bengal," said Tamando inspector-in-charge Basanta Kumar Dalai. The duo has been sent to jail after their bail was rejected, Dalai said.

According to police sources, the incident occurred when the woman, who was visiting her

husband in Chandaka area of the City, left home at night after a fight with him.

While walking to the railway station alone, she was approached by the two men, who offered her a lift. However, instead of taking her to the railway station, they took her to a house in Ranasingpur area, where the two took turns to rape her. The woman later

managed to escape.

However, it was only Sunday that the woman finally mustered the courage to file a complaint at the Tamando police station, following which she was immediately taken to a hospital for a medical examination.

Acting on the complaint, police swung into action and nabbed the duo.

## Oppn moves Gov, seeks Health min's resignation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** After stalling proceedings in the Assembly over the death of 12 patients in a fire at SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack, Opposition MLAs Monday submitted a memorandum to Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, seeking the resignation of Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling over the mishap.

In a joint memorandum signed by MLAs of the BJD, Congress and CPI(M), the Opposition stated that the hospital fire has caused severe distress and deeply shocked the people of Odisha.

"This tragedy raises grave concerns regarding safety standards, administrative accountability, and the overall condition of public healthcare infrastructure in the state," they said in their six-point charter of demands submitted to the Governor.

Apart from seeking the resignation

of the Health minister, the Opposition MLAs demanded compensation of Rs 1 crore for the family of each deceased patient, along with a government job for one member of each affected family. They also called for a judicial inquiry led by a sitting or retired judge of the Orissa High Court, free medical treatment for all injured patients, and financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh each.

They further demanded the immediate arrest of the SCBMCH superintendent and stringent legal action against all responsible officials, contractors, and agencies found guilty of negligence.

"We also demand a comprehensive fire safety audit of all hospitals—government and private—across the state, with strict enforcement of compliance measures," they said.

Notably, the Odisha government has placed four officers under suspension, transferred some officials from key positions, and set up a judicial commission headed by a retired district judge to probe the incident. P4

## ARCTIC, ANTARCTIC ICE HOLDS MYRIAD SECRETS

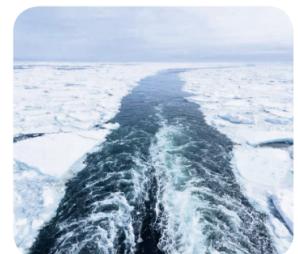
ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kilpisjärvi, March 30:** As bubbles rippled across the frigid Finnish lake, diver Daan Jacobs emerged from a hole carved out of the thick, crackling ice.

The journey had taken him 8 meters (26 feet) beneath the surface, where sunlight filtered through the Arctic ice and fish swam around a rock formation. It's a remote place few will ever see, especially in winter, when snow blankets the ice and temperatures on land approach minus 40 degrees in both Celsius and Fahrenheit.

But Jacobs, a biodiversity adviser in the Netherlands, is one of a growing number of fortunate underwater explorers.

He was part of the Polar Scientific Diving class in the far north of Finland earlier this month, a program designed by the Finnish Scientific Diving Academy to train the next generation of scientists and researchers to dive beneath the Arctic and Antarctic ice to study the flora and fauna below.



"The view is beautiful," Jacobs said, gasping for air following his 45-minute dive.

The Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the planet. From impacting worldwide weather patterns to making the polar bear population smaller, weaker and hungrier, because they rely on the sea ice to hunt from, higher temperatures at the North Pole spell disaster for the entire globe.

In Antarctica, meanwhile, global warming is leading to melting of ice sheets, prompting sea level rise and disrupting ocean ecosystems.

The Finnish Scientific Diving

Academy's class aims to not only train more divers, but also to convince the world that the polar ice crisis requires additional research.

"Because it is melting so fast, we need to have more people deployed there, more science to be done, to understand better what happens," said Erik Wurz, a marine biologist and one of the class's scientific diving instructors. "We have to do more and we need to be fast to save this unique ecosystem in the Arctic, but also the Antarctic."

And in a world that's increasingly outsourcing work to artificial intelligence and robots, British Antarctic Survey marine biologist Simon Morley said that human hands are still necessary for this. Dragging nets across the seafloor would destroy the habitat, and a remotely operated submersible or robot can usually only pick up one specimen at a time.

"A diver can go down and pick up 12 urchins, put them in a bag and not affect the rest of the system," said Morley, who isn't part of the course.

10001/151/2526

### ଅଶୁଭାତ ସତର୍କତା

**ଲକ୍ଷଣ**

- ପ୍ରବଳ ଝାଳ ବୋହିବା
- ମୁଣ୍ଡ ବୁଲାଇ ଅନ୍ଧାର ଦିଶିବା ଓ ବାନ୍ତି ଲାଗିବା
- ପ୍ରବଳ ଶୋଷ ଲାଗିବା
- ମାଂସପେଶୀ ଟାଣି ହେବା
- ଚର୍ମ ଶୁଷ୍କ, ଲାଲ ଓ ଉତ୍ତପ୍ତ ହେବା
- ଅଚେତ ହେବା କିମ୍ବା ବାତ ମାରିବା

**ସତର୍କତା**

- ଦିନ ୧୧ଟା ରୁ ୩ଟା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଖରା ତାତି ଅଧିକ ଥାଏ। ଏହି ସମୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବାହାରକୁ ଯାଆନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ। ଜରୁରୀ କାମ ଥିଲେ ବାହାରକୁ ଯିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ପାଣି ପିଅନ୍ତୁ ଓ ସାଥରେ ଛତା, ଚପଲ ଓ ପିଇବା ପାଣି ନିଅନ୍ତୁ
- ଧଳା ରଙ୍ଗର ଢିଲା ପୋଷାକ, ଛତା ଓ ଜୋତା ବ୍ୟବହାର କରନ୍ତୁ
- ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଛାଇରେ ବିଶ୍ରାମ ନିଅନ୍ତୁ
- ଖରାରେ କଠିନ ପରିଶ୍ରମ କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ। ଅଧିକ ଦୂର ଚଳନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ
- କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାର ମାଦକ ଦ୍ରବ୍ୟ ସେବନ କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ

**ପ୍ରତିକାର**

- ଅଶୁଭାତ ଆକ୍ରାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଖୋଲା ଓ ଥଣ୍ଡା ଯାଗାକୁ ନେଇଯାଆନ୍ତୁ, ଓ.ଆର.ଏସ୍./ ଚିନି ଲୁଣ ସର୍ବତ୍ର ସାବାପାଣି ପିଆନ୍ତୁ
- ପୋଷାକ ଯଥାସମ୍ଭବ ଖୋଲି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ
- ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଧୋଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ, ଓଦା କପଡ଼ାରେ ପୋଛନ୍ତୁ
- ରୋଗୀକୁ ପଖା/ କୁଲର/ ଏସି ପବନରେ ଶୁଖାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ଓ ପାଣି ସିଞ୍ଚନ କରନ୍ତୁ
- ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଉନ୍ନତ ନହେଲେ ତୁରନ୍ତ ହସ୍ପିଟାଲ ନେଇ ଚିକିତ୍ସା କରନ୍ତୁ

**ବୟସ୍କ ତଥା ଅସୁସ୍ଥ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଗର୍ଭବତୀ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଅଶୁଭାତର ଆଶଙ୍କା ଅଧିକ**

ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

facebook.com/HFWOdisha  
@HFWOdisha  
http://www.health.odisha.gov.in/

OIPR-10001/10003/2/25-26/0028

WEST ASIA CONFLICT

# CM directs Collectors to act against hoarding

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday directed district Collectors to maintain the supply chain of essential commodities and take strict action against hoarders and black marketers creating artificial shortages in the wake of the ongoing West Asia conflict.

Majhi issued the directions during a video conference with district Collectors while reviewing the situation arising out of the conflict.

“Keep the district-level enforcement squads on 24-hour alert, regularly monitor markets and take strict action against unscrupulous traders,” he said. This was Majhi’s first meeting with district Collectors after attending the March 27 meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The chief minister emphasised the importance of coordinated action among officials and asked district administrations to act firmly against those spreading rumours or creating panic over the conflict.

He also asked officials to closely monitor social media to prevent the spread of misinformation. Officials said Crisis Management Groups have been constituted at both the state and district levels to ensure coordinated monitoring of the



## Min assures LPG relief for caterers

**Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister** Krishna Chandra Patra Monday urged the Catering Association of Odisha (CAO) not to panic, assuring that the state government is working to address the needs of all sections. A CAO delegation met the minister and apprised him of the current challenges faced by the sector due to the shortage of commercial cylinders. The Catering Association of Odisha supports the livelihood of over one lakh families in the state, including sweepers, cleaners, drivers, cooks and other workers, whose households are entirely dependent on the sector, said CAO President Binaya Bhushan Patnaik. “Our members play a vital role in social events such as marriages, thread ceremonies, official functions and funerals. Due to the non-availability of commercial gas cylinders, many have already shut down their businesses,” said CAO Secretary Debi Prasad Rath. Minister Patra assured that the government would soon address the LPG shortage and take steps to ensure availability of commercial gas cylinders.



situation and the availability of essential commodities.

Majhi directed district Collectors to regularly review the availability of petrol, diesel, LPG, fertilisers and other essential goods at the local level, and to continue public awareness campaigns to prevent panic buying.

Principal Secretary of the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department Sanjay

Singh made a presentation on the steps being taken by the state government, while district Collectors briefed the chief minister on measures initiated at the local level.

Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister KC Chandra Patra, Chief Secretary Anu Garg, Development Commissioner DK Singh and other senior officials were also present at the meeting.

# OIL India, CSIR-IMMT pact for critical minerals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** Oil India Limited (OIL) Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT) to set up a Centre of Excellence for critical minerals, marking a significant step towards strengthening India’s strategic mineral ecosystem.

The collaboration, formalised in Bhubaneswar, aligns with the National Critical Mineral Mission of the Ministry of Mines and aims to boost research, exploration and processing of critical minerals in line with the coun-



try’s self-reliance goals.

With this agreement, OIL becomes the first “Industry Spoke” of CSIR-IMMT under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, signalling a new model of collaboration between the energy and mining sectors.

The MoU was signed by Saloma Yomdo, Director (Exploration & Development), Oil India

Limited, and Ramanuj Narayan, Director, CSIR-IMMT, in the presence of OIL CMD Ranjit Rath. Functional directors and senior officials of OIL, along with CSIR-IMMT scientists, including Kali Sanjay and Satyajit Rath, were present.

Speaking on the occasion, Rath said the agreement would boost OIL India’s role in the Na-

tional Critical Mineral Mission and help expand its footprint beyond hydrocarbons.

Rath also highlighted the potential of artificial intelligence and machine learning in identifying mineral resources, adding that OIL India has identified ten focus areas for such technology-driven initiatives in consultation with the CSIR Director General.

Narayan said CSIR-IMMT brings strong expertise in research and technology-driven solutions for the mining, minerals and metals sectors, with a focus on critical minerals and sustainable development.

## BMC launches anti-rabies drive

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar:** Under the Swachh Survekshan initiative, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Monday launched a citywide stray dog vaccination drive to make the capital rabies-free. Mayor Sulochana Das and Commissioner Chanchal Rana inaugurated the programme at the BMC headquarters in the presence of Deputy Mayor Manjulata Kanhar, Standing Committee Chairman Biranchi Narayan Mahasupakar, Additional Commissioner Ratnakar Sahoo and other officials. A total of 15 teams have been deployed for the drive, which will cover all wards in phases, with each team completing one ward before moving to the next. The initiative was flagged off with vehicles carrying the vaccination teams. Rabies, a fatal disease spread through bites, scratches or even licking by infected dogs, is being targeted under a three-phase strategy by the civic body. The drive aligns with the national goal of eliminating rabies by 2030 under the National Rabies Control Programme. The drive is expected to be completed in 75 to 90 days. Stray dogs will be safely captured, vaccinated and marked with non-toxic paint for identification before being released. Real-time data will be tracked through a mobile application developed by Mission Rabies-WVS.

## Guv calls for holistic cancer fight strategy

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Monday stressed a comprehensive approach to tackle the rising cancer burden, focusing on awareness and prevention, early detection and accessible treatment.

Addressing the “Cancer-Free Odisha” Awareness Conclave and “Mahanayak-2026” awards, organised by the Asim Odisha Foundation Trust, he said cancer is not just a medical issue but a major societal challenge affecting families across the state.

He noted that Odisha, like many parts of the country, is witnessing a steady rise in cancer cases due to lifestyle changes, tobacco use, environmental factors, lack of awareness and delayed diagnosis.

Highlighting prevention, the Governor said awareness about



risk factors such as tobacco consumption, unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles can significantly reduce cancer incidence. “An aware society is an empowered society, and prevention is far more effective than cure,” he said. He stressed the need for early detection through stronger primary healthcare systems and expanded screening, especially in rural and underserved areas, noting that timely diagnosis improves survival and reduces financial and emotional burden.

Governor also emphasised bridging the urban-rural gap and strengthening collaboration

among government, private sector and civil society.

Congratulating the Mahanayak-2026 awardees, he lauded their contributions and called for collective efforts to build a cancer-aware and cancer-free Odisha.

Korei MLA Akash Dasnayak and former Balasore MP Rabinendra Kumar Jena also addressed the event. Asim Odisha Foundation Trust Chairperson and Managing Trustee Asima Das delivered the welcome address, while former Bhubaneswar North MLA Priyadarshi Mishra proposed the vote of thanks.

## National Media Conclave, award ceremony in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** The National Media Conclave 2026 and the 13th I-Women of Substance Awards were held at Jaydev Bhawan, bringing together media leaders, academicians, social reformers and change-makers from across the country.

The event began with a formal inaugural session, where speakers highlighted the media’s role as a pillar of democracy and its responsibility in shaping a Viksit Odisha 2036 and Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

A significant highlight of the inaugural session was the launch of the weekly newspaper “Ajira Samparka” and the official website of Kalinga Gaurav Foundation, marking a new beginning in the journey towards informed communication, digital outreach, and social empowerment.

The conclave featured a series of insightful panel discussions on diverse themes including media responsibility,

political perspectives, cultural influence, entrepreneurship, healthcare, and the role of women in nation-building. Eminent speakers shared their thoughts, emphasizing ethical journalism, inclusive growth, and the collective responsibility of society in achieving a developed India.

The evening session witnessed the much-awaited 13th I-Women of Substance Award Ceremony, a heartfelt tribute to women who have made extraordinary contributions in various fields. A total of 27 outstanding women were honoured for their remarkable achievements, resilience, and dedication towards society.

In addition, 31 teachers from across Odisha were conferred with the National Builder Awards in recognition of their invaluable role in shaping young minds and building the nation. The event also acknowledged the contribution of NGOs and social organisations working tirelessly at the grassroots level.

## AI can boost organ transplantation: Panda



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** Emphasising the transformative role of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare, Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister’s Office Subhasish Panda said AI could significantly advance organ transplantation in India by integrating vast datasets and enabling more informed clinical decisions.

Speaking at a dissemination workshop-cum-regional Continuing Medical Education (CME) programme on “Organ Transplantation and Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare,” he noted that AI has the potential to transform the transplantation ecosystem.

He said AI can streamline donor-recipient matching using genetic, clinical and laboratory data, enable real-time tracking of organ availability, optimise transport for timely delivery and support clinical decisions through predictive analytics and intelligent dashboards.

Panda noted that India ranks third globally in organ trans-

plantation, with around 20,000 procedures in the past year. However, nearly 82 per cent of donations come from living donors, with women forming the largest group.

He expressed concern that a large share of transplants are carried out in the private sector, affecting affordability, and stressed the need for greater public awareness and increased participation from government institutions.

The programme, organised by AIIMS-Bhubaneswar in collaboration with the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS), brought together over 300 doctors from Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand. Participants included representatives from AIIMS-Patna, AIIMS-Deoghar, AIIMS-Kalyani and AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, along with experts in organ transplantation and AI in healthcare.

Highlighting AI’s practical benefits, Panda said intelligent systems can link nationwide databases to identify organ availability in real time and

optimise transport routes, reducing transit time between donor and recipient locations.

Praising AIIMS-Bhubaneswar’s growth, he said the institute has emerged as a leading healthcare centre, comparable to AIIMS-Delhi, and has significantly strengthened regional healthcare infrastructure.

Executive Director and CEO Ashutosh Biswas stressed the need to expand donor pools, improve institutional preparedness and align with national policy frameworks, and announced plans to establish a regional centre of excellence for organ transplantation and AI integration.

NAMS President Digambar Behera highlighted the wide gap between demand and supply in organ transplantation, noting that India needs nearly 5 lakh organs annually, while only about 3 per cent of the demand is met, leaving over 82,000 patients on waiting lists.

The CME programme featured experts from institutions such as IIT-Bhubaneswar, PGIMER Chandigarh, NISER Bhubaneswar, OTTET, IISER Berhampur and IGIMS Patna, along with national transplant bodies including ROTTO and SOTTO.

Discussions during the day-long session covered key issues such as ethical and legal challenges, national guidelines, institutional preparedness, antimicrobial resistance, pharmacotherapeutics, strategies to promote organ donation, and the growing role of AI in healthcare.

## DPS Kalinga hosts Spring Fiesta



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** The five-day Spring Fiesta at DPS Kalinga concluded on a fun-filled note Monday, with children showcasing their talent through song, dance and a short skit.

The camp featured a wide range of activities conducted by certified trainers, including gymnastics (JM Sports Academy), chess (Chess Turf Academy), archery (Odisha Archery Association) and roller skating (Odisha Roller Skating Association), along with basketball, cricket, football, tennis, table tennis, aqua zumba, swimming, art, craft, dramatics, dance and music, brain gym, coding, cookery and

storytelling. A magic show by noted mentalist and magician Chinmay Banerjee was also a highlight.

Noted ceramic artist and sculptor Narottam Das and clay modelling expert Arya Samal conducted engaging sessions with the children. RJ Smita led a voice-up session, while Cruis Behera, a DPS Kalinga student, took coding classes. Noted Odia film director and producer Basanta Sahoo also interacted with the participants.

Parents and grandparents actively joined cooking and candle-making sessions, adding to the festive spirit. Overall, the five-day fiesta blended fun with learning for all participants.



## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn Before the Notary Public, RAYAGADA on Dated 23 February 2026, I, Mr. RATIKANTA NAGABANSHA, Address : AT-UTKAPADU, PO-BADA ALUBADI, PS-SESIKHAL, DIST-RAYAGADA, ODISHA, PIN-765017 have changed my name from “NAGBANSH RATIKANT” to “RATIKANTA NAGABANSHA”. Henceforth I shall be known as “RATIKANTA NAGABANSHA” for all purposes.

## Bakul Day of Service draws record volunteers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 30:** Bakul Foundation, known for popularising volunteerism among Odisha’s youth, recently celebrated Bakul Day of Service at 30 locations across Bhubaneswar. Held on the Sunday before Bakul’s birthday April 1, the event saw around 600 volunteers engage with over 3,500 children from City slums.

The event was supported, with donations ranging from ₹10 to ₹50,000. Omfed, which backed the previous two Days of Service, also contributed this year by providing lassi and buttermilk for all the children.

Due to the heat, activities in some slums were held in the morning and in others during the late afternoon. Volunteers could choose to work in various parts of Bhubaneswar, including Ishaneswar, Harekrushna



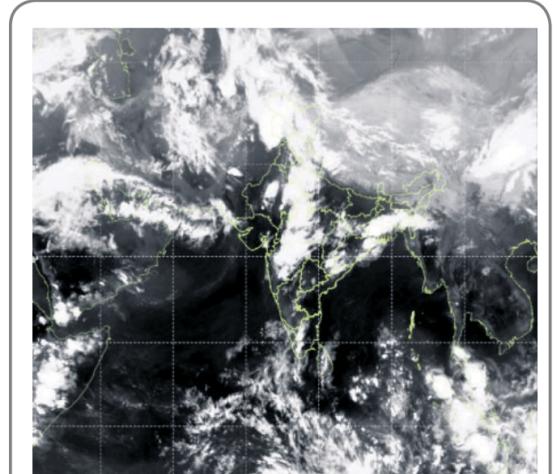
Nagar, Panda Park in Chandrasekharpur, Munda Sahi, Tapovan Basti in Khandagiri, or Biseswar Basti and Sabar Sahi in central Bhubaneswar.

According to Shruti Kanungo, MA Sociology student and Chief Coordinator since 2022, the Day of Service has three goals: introduce youth to volunteerism, provide children with joyful learning through art, storytelling, games and creative activities, and sensitise young people to challeng-

es faced by slum communities. Volunteers like Anshika Pradhan appreciated the unique culture and stories of each slum. Sanskar Mishra noted how communities, initially expecting resources, warmed to volunteers’ selfless work. For Bidya, a BJB College student, the day was special as she helped an insecure girl gradually open up and participate enthusiastically, reflecting the impact of encouragement and mentorship.

## Odia Pakhya from April 1 across state

**Bhubaneswar:** The state government will celebrate Odia Pakhya, a 14-day cultural festival, from April 1 to 14 across Odisha, marking the period from Odisha Day to the Odia New Year. Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj announced this at a press conference Monday, stating that the festival, introduced in 2025, will be observed with greater scale and participation this year. The celebrations will begin April 1 with Odisha Divas, organised by the Information and Public Relations department. To boost public engagement, the Odia Language, Literature & Culture department has launched a dedicated website and mobile app, enabling citizens to upload selfies, reels and cultural content, take part in online quizzes and download digital certificates. The minister urged citizens, institutions and youth groups to actively participate, calling it an opportunity to reconnect with Odisha’s rich heritage and celebrate its language and culture with pride.



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	35.9°	35.6°	Light to moderate rain or thunderstorm very likely to occur
Min Temp	26.8°	24.4°	
Humidity	82%	81%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

# Wildfire rages in Boinda as forest dept sits tight



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boinda, March 30:** A wildfire that has engulfed the Kenchuanali forest under Dhandatopa forest range of Thakurgarh police limits in Angul district is showing no sign of subsiding, even as the Forest department is yet to take effective measures to douse the raging blaze. The blaze has raised fears

of widespread destruction of the dense forest, which is home to valuable tree species. As flames continue to spread, wild animals are reportedly moving toward nearby villages, increasing the risk of man-animal conflict.

Residents alleged that timber smugglers have been targeting the forest, while seasonal collection of Mohua flowers draw-

ing people into the area. With dry leaves covering the forest floor during the summer, some individuals are suspected of deliberately setting fires to ease flower collection.

Amid intense heat in recent days, the fire has intensified, filling the sky with smoke and contributing to air pollution. Several valuable medicinal plants, along with insects and other small species, have been destroyed in the blaze.

Villagers in nearby areas said they are living in fear as the fire continues unchecked. Despite repeated alerts to the Dhandatopa forest officials, no effective action has been taken to douse the flames, they alleged, adding that regular patrolling is also lacking.

Locals warned that unless immediate steps are taken, the forest could be completely destroyed.

When contacted, Dhandatopa Forest Ranger Babrubahan Sahu claimed measures are being taken to control the fire but did not provide further details.

# 14 schoolgirls fall ill in Mayurbhanj

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Morada, March 30:** At least 14 schoolgirls fell ill after consuming food at their hostel in Mayurbhanj district, Monday.

The incident occurred at the Government Upper Primary School in Bhaliadiha under Morada block. The affected students were admitted to Kisanantdi Community Health Centre in Baramail for treatment. The students complained of stomach pain, vomiting and fever after consuming hostel food Monday before being rushed to the CHC.

According to officials, the school has 324 students on its roll from Balvatika to Class VIII. The campus also houses a Kasturba Gandhi Girl's Hostel and a residential facility for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls. Around 170 girls reside in Kasturba Gandhi Girl's hostel.

HM HariPriya Mohanta, the superintendent of the hostel, and Sujatarani Panda, teacher-cum-warden denied the charges. Dr Chandramohan Singh termed the illness as food poisoning. Block education officer Bijay Kumar Panigrahi said a medical team had earlier inspected the campus due to concerns over unsafe drinking water. He added that another inspection will be conducted following the latest incident.

# Woman Maoist surrenders



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rourkela, March 30:** A woman Maoist surrendered before Odisha Police Monday, a day ahead of the March 31 deadline to make India "Naxal-free", officials said.

The 19-year-old, identified as Mongdi Honhaga, is a native of Marangponga village within Chhotangaara police station limits in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district.

She initially worked as a logistics supplier for Maoists operating in the Saranda forests along the Odisha-Jharkhand border before being recruited into the outlawed outfit by a leader identified as Anmol, who was recently killed, police said.

DIG, Western Range, Brijesh Rai, said Honhaga was involved in the Banko stone quarry loot case, in which Maoists looted about five tonnes of explosives.

"We got information about her intention to surrender and

contacted her. She was disillusioned with Maoist ideology and disturbed by corruption and physical and mental harassment within the outfit," he said.

Rourkela SP Nitesh Wadhvani said so far her involvement has been established in four cases, including a railway track blast at Renjda and an IED blast targeting CRPF personnel at Banko.

"She is a category 'B' Maoist and is entitled to financial assistance of up to ₹2.65 lakh. Benefits related to marriage, skill development and health will also be provided under the Odisha government's rehabilitation scheme," Wadhvani said.

According to Odisha DGP YB Khurania, as many as 77 Maoists have surrendered before police since 2025, while 23 others from the state laid down their arms before Chhattisgarh Police.

# Contempt petition filed against Keonjhar DM

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar/Hatadihi, March 30:** A contempt of court petition has been filed in the Orissa High Court against Keonjhar Collector and District Mineral Foundation (DMF) chairman Vishal Singh for alleged non-compliance with court orders.

The case (CONTC No. 1870/2026) follows a recent instance in which the High Court had pulled up a senior secretary-rank official for failing to implement its directives.

According to reports, a DMF employee was allegedly terminated orally and in violation of rules after demanding a salary hike. The employee subsequently moved the High Court by filing a writ petition (WPC No. 35177/2025).

Subsequently, the High Court directed the Collector to examine the complaint within four weeks December 10, 2025. In compliance, a notice (Letter No. 84 dated Jan. 13, 2026) was issued, fixing January 17, 2026 as the date of hearing.

However, more than two months have passed since the hearing date, and the outcome of the inquiry has not been made public. This delay prompted the filing of the contempt petition against the Collector.

# Allset for Patabari festival at Hingula shrine

Talcher king urges people to light lamps, adhere to vegetarian food during the festival

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Talcher, March 30:** The famed annual yatra of Talcher's presiding deity, Goddess Hingula, revered as a form of fire will begin Tuesday, with the sacred site for the rituals has already been identified to the east of the temple.

According to tradition, Patabari festival also known as Nabakalebara of the goddess will be celebrated with much devotion and gaiety. The ritual is considered rare, occurring only once during a king's lifetime. Following the death of former king of Talcher, Rajendra Chandra Deb Birabar Harichandan, last year, prince Bijayendra Chandra Deb has ascended the throne as the 26th king. In line with custom, he has announced of organising of the Nabakalebara and Patabari



festivals this year. As part of the rites, previously worshipped symbolic elements of the deity — including

wooden posts known as Alams, cloth and ceremonial canopies and gold and silver ornaments will be immersed, and new

adornments will be installed. Artisans will carve and prepare a new sacred wooden structure following prescribed rituals.

Special processions will also be held to collect the sacred wood, typically from a selected sal tree that meets strict religious criteria.

Traditionally, the wood is cut in stages using golden, silver and iron axes. During the ceremony, the temple priest, dressed in female attire, performs rituals including crowning the king and queen, formally recognising the new ruler.

The festival's rituals and traditions will remain unchanged throughout the reigning king's lifetime. On the occasion, the king has urged all devotees to observe a vegetarian diet and light lamps in every household in the name of the goddess.

# HC: Reinstate Deogarh municipal chairperson

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Deogarh, March 30:** The Orissa High Court has directed the state government to reinstate Deogarh Municipality chairperson Shanti Manjari Dei, who was removed from office earlier this year.

In its order, the court held that the state government had acted unlawfully in removing Dei from her post and instructed authorities to restore her to the position with immediate effect. The directive was issued to the Director of Municipal Administration and the Special Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development department.

The court also ordered



that Preet Kumar Bhoj, the vice-chairperson who had been serving as acting chairperson, be relieved of the additional charges following Dei's reinstatement.

Dei was removed from office January 28, 2025, after allegations that she had failed to convene regular monthly meetings

and had committed irregularities in market tenders and the Mukta scheme. Following a probe by the district administration, the state government initiated disciplinary proceedings and removed her from the post. Bhoj assumed charge as acting chairperson on January 31, 2025.

After her removal, Dei had alleged that the action was politically motivated and challenged the decision in court. The matter had been pending before the High Court until the latest ruling.

The court's decision has sparked celebrations among Dei's supporters and members of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in the district.

# Narla block chairman's trouble deepens

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, March 30:** Police have filed a petition in the JMFC court in Madanpur Rampur seeking an arrest warrant against Durga Prasad Mohanty, husband of BJD MLA Manorama Mohanty and chairman of Narla block in Kalahandi district, in connection with a case involving alleged death threats to local tehsildar and obstruction in government work.

According to police, a case was registered against Mohanty following allegations that he interfered in official duties and threatened the Narla tehsildar over phone. The complaint was filed by tehsildar Bibhu Prasad Singh.

Police visited the MLA's government residence in Bhubaneswar



Sunday to serve a notice to Mohanty but could not locate him. Subsequently, Kalahandi police filed an application in the JMFC court seeking issuance of a warrant against Mohanty.

Police said Mohanty is facing four cases, including the present one related to threats to the tehsildar. Chargesheets have already been filed in three of these cases.

Despite efforts over the past

week, police have been unable to trace Mohanty. With the warrant plea now filed in court, his legal troubles are expected to intensify.

As per the complaint, Mohanty had allegedly been interfering in various government works and creating obstacles. When the tehsildar objected, Mohanty allegedly threatened to kill him over a phone call.

The tehsildar, in his complaint, stated that such conduct by an elected representative raises serious concerns about the safety of government officials.

A case (72/26) was registered at Narla police station March 15. Police have launched an investigation under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including Sections 296, 221, 224, 351(2) and 351(3).

**S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER**  
For & on behalf of the President of India, the Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer, Electric Loco Shed, Rourkela, S. E. Railway, invites E-Tender for the below mentioned work : IREPS Tender No. : TRS-ROU-16-2025-26; Description of work : Repair/Reconditioning of Auxiliary Motors of WAG-9 type 3-phase electric locomotives at ELS/Rourkela; Approx. Cost of Work : ₹ 2,79,72,690.38; Earnest Money : ₹ 2,79,500.00; Date & time for closing of E-Tender : 11:00 Hrs. of 21.04.2026; Website Particulars & Details : https://www.ireps.gov.in The complete particulars of the E-Tender will be available on aforementioned website. Manual offers are not allowed against the tender, and any such manual offer received, shall be ignored. (PR-1360)

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
Tender No. CAOCRSPBBS-08-2026  
For & on behalf of the President of India, the Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer, Electric Loco Shed, Rourkela, S. E. Railway, invites E-Tender for the below mentioned work : IREPS Tender No. : TRS-ROU-16-2025-26; Description of work : Repair/Reconditioning of Auxiliary Motors of WAG-9 type 3-phase electric locomotives at ELS/Rourkela; Approx. Cost of Work : ₹ 2,79,72,690.38; Earnest Money : ₹ 2,79,500.00; Date & time for closing of E-Tender : 11:00 Hrs. of 21.04.2026; Website Particulars & Details : https://www.ireps.gov.in The complete particulars of the E-Tender will be available on aforementioned website. Manual offers are not allowed against the tender, and any such manual offer received, shall be ignored. (PR-1360)

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, NAYAGARH (R&B) DIVISION, NAYAGARH WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
Tender Call Notice  
E-mail : pwwdoffngd34@gmail.com  
Bid Identification No. S.E-Nayagarh (R&B) Division-Online 13/2025-26 No.34001/277/2526 : The work specified in Sl. No.2 vide this office Quotation Call Notice No.03/2025-26 dtd.10.03.2026 is hereby cancelled due to non-participation of bidders.  
Sd./ Superintending Engineer, Potteru Canal Division, M.V-79  
OIPR-32001/32551/1/25-26/0002

**भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक**  
**RESERVE BANK OF INDIA**  
www.rbi.org.in  
Human Resource Management Department  
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Marg Bhubaneswar – 751001  
Odisha

**Engagement of Bank's Medical Consultant on contract basis with fixed hourly remuneration**

Reserve Bank of India invites applications from Medical Graduates of any University recognized by Medical Council of India with at least 2 years' experience to fill up 02 (Two) vacancies for the post of Bank's Medical Consultant [01 Unreserved (UR) category and 01 Scheduled Tribe (ST) category] on contract basis, with fixed hourly remuneration for the Bank's Dispensaries located at Bhubaneswar. Details of terms and conditions etc. and format of application form are available on the website of the Bank (www.rbi.org.in). **Last date of submission of application at Bank's office at Bhubaneswar is April 20, 2026.**

**NOTE:** In case of any corrigendum issued on the above advertisement, it will be published only in Bank's website.

**By Order**  
**Regional Director**

**भारत सरकार**  
कार्पोरेट कार्य मंत्रालय  
त्वरित कार्पोरेट समाप्त प्रसंस्करण केंद्र (सी-पेस),  
आई.आई.सी.ए. बिल्डिंग, 7वीं मंजिल,  
प्लॉट P-6, 7, 8, से-5,  
आई.एम.टी. मानेसर,  
गुडगाँव, हरियाणा - 122050  
Email: roc.pace@mca.gov.in

**Government of India**  
Ministry of Corporate Affairs  
Centre for Processing Accelerated  
Corporate Exit (C-PACE),  
IICA Building, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
Plot P-6, 7, 8, Sector-5,  
IMT Manesar,  
Gurgaon, Haryana - 122050  
Email: roc.pace@mca.gov.in

**Form No. STK - 6**  
**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
[Pursuant to sub-section (2) and sub-section (4) of section 248 of the Companies Act, 2013 and rules 7 of the Companies (Removal of Names of Companies from the Register of Companies) Rules, 2016]  
**Public Notice: ROC/C-PACE/STK-2/248(2)/2025-26/2258** **Date: 19/03/2026**

Reference:  
In the matter of striking off or removal of names of (9) companies in the Odisha state under section 248 of the Companies Act, 2013 in respect of:

S. No.	Work Item	CIN	Company Name
1	AC2637410	U74999OR2021PTCO36610	SHRESAICI PRIVATE LIMITED
2	AC2366146	U86100OR2019GAT030711	ODISHA CANCER CARE PRIVATE LIMITED
3	AC2433691	U52590OR2016PTCO25121	RK MOHANTY STEELS AND PIPES PRIVATE LIMITED
4	AC2417547	U36990OR2023PTCO41749	STAIRWAY GOLD & DIAMONDS PRIVATE LIMITED
5	AC2542387	U74140OR2015OPCO19455	SKASHA CONSULTANCY PRIVATE LIMITED (OPC)
6	AC2612696	U47599OD2025PTCO49634	BERHAMPUR HOME DECOR PRIVATE LIMITED
7	AC2572218	U74999OR2019PTCO30668	ADIBHUTA SOLUTIONS PRIVATE LIMITED
8	AC2558578	U47711OD2025PTCO49923	TEETIDE GREEN FASHION PRIVATE LIMITED
9	AC1910766	U80904OR2017OPCO27927	BIBHASH EDUCARE (OPC) PRIVATE LIMITED

2. Notice is hereby given that the Registrar of Companies has received applications from the above-mentioned companies under section 248(2) of the Companies Act, 2013 for removal of its/their name (s) from the register of companies either on the ground that they have failed to commence business within one year of their incorporation or on the ground that the company(ies) is/are not carrying on any business or operation for a period of two immediately preceding financial years and has/have not made any application (s) within such period for obtaining the status of a dormant company under section 455 of the Companies Act, 2013 or the company(ies) have obtained the status of dormant company/subscribers to the memorandum have not paid the subscription which they had undertaken to pay at the time of incorporation of a company and a declaration to this effect has not been filed within one hundred and eighty days of its incorporation under subsection (1) of section 10A/ have not been carrying on any business or operations, as revealed after the physical verification carried out under sub-section (9) of section 12, but it/they do not wish to continue its/their registration as companies and have, therefore, requested for removal/strike off of its/their names from the register of companies.

3. Accordingly, the Registrar of Companies proposes to remove or strike off the names of the above-mentioned companies from the Register of Companies.

4. Any person objecting to the proposed removal or striking off name of the companies from the register of companies may send his or her objection to the office address mentioned here above within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice.

**Irkan Titkey**  
Deputy Registrar  
Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit  
CBC 07123/11/0803/2526



FOCUS UNEMPLOYMENT

# THE GRADUATE LOTTERY



Eleven million educated young Indians are today squandering the most productive years of their lives in a lottery they will almost certainly lose

Imagine spending the best years of your life from age 22 to 29, in a waiting room. You are educated, ambitious, and capable. But the job that you are waiting for has odds worse than a lottery. So, you study harder, make an attempt once more, and wait again. Meanwhile, your peers elsewhere are earning, saving, climbing career ladders, getting married, starting families. You are doing none of that. You are preparing for the next exam.

This is the lived reality for an estimated 11 million young graduates in India today. The fifth edition of the State of Working India report published this month, by Azim Premji University reveals a startling statistic: 67% of all unemployed youth aged 20-29 are graduates, that is 1.1 crore people. In 2004, graduates constituted just 32% of the unemployed youth cohort. Their share in the youth population has itself risen from 10% to 28% over these two decades. But employment has not kept pace. Between 2004 and 2023, India produced roughly 50 lakh graduates every year. Only 28 lakh graduates found any employment annually, and a mere 17 lakh entered salaried work. The arithmetic of national waste is stark. The overall unemployment rate among all graduates aged 22 to 29 runs as high as 33%. Yet this same rate drops to below 4% after age 30. Something happens around age 30 to dissolve what had been an acute crisis just years earlier. What happens is not success. It is resignation. Young men eventually succumb to economic pressure, marriage obligations, or parental urgency and accept whatever work is available, however dead-end. Young women, by contrast, often exit the labour force altogether, retreating into unpaid domestic care work. The data shows this starkly: male unemployment falls because men find some job; female unemployment falls because women stop looking. Why do millions of graduates

spend the prime years of their lives in this limbo? The answers lie in a rational calculation, which is ultimately socially ruinous. The private sector offers starting salaries that have barely moved in two decades. In 2011, a young male graduate earned about ₹21,800 a month. By 2023, this figure had fallen to ₹19,573. That is a drastic drop, and when adjusted for inflation, it is disastrous. No wonder those educated youth don't miss out on joining the private sector treadmill of entry level jobs. Government jobs are a different story. A government driver, by comparison, may earn four times his private sector counterpart. A government clerk enjoys health cover, a pension, iron-clad job security, and social prestige. No wonder the aspiring graduate chooses to wait.

This wait takes a specific and peculiar form: the endless preparation for competitive examinations. A study by Kunal Mangal of Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission data found that a single TNPSC Group 4 recruitment in 2018-19 drew 13.7 million applicants, nearly four times the next largest recruiter in the state. About 80% of all unemployed individuals in Tamil Nadu were simultaneously preparing for a TNPSC exam. When the state imposed a partial hiring freeze between 2001 and 2006, vacancies fell by 86%, but exam applications actually rose by 7%. This pattern is not

peculiar to Tamil Nadu. It is seen across States. The government exam has become India's great waiting room. The private sector, meanwhile, offers a treadmill at the entry level, not a career. The Economic Survey 2024-25 noted that only 8.25% of graduates work in roles aligned with their qualifications. Nearly half are in elementary or semi-skilled work — jobs that require a degree for eligibility but deliver no skill development, no learning by doing, no career progression. Between 2012 and 2019, India's GDP grew at 6.7% annually while employment grew at 0.1%. Of 83 million jobs added between 2021-22 and 2023-24, nearly half were in agriculture.

The gender dimensions of this crisis deserves special attention. For young women, the problem is not just unemployment but erasure. PLFS data confirm that educated women in their early 20s report high unemployment, signaling a genuine desire to work. But by their late 20s, instead of finding employment, they exit the labour force. Marriage expectations and the assumption that domestic care falls entirely on women extinguish participation.

Now consider the perverse policy feedback loop. Governments, sympathetic to the plight of unemployed graduates, respond with cash transfer schemes and subsidised coaching for competitive exams. This

fiscal expenditure, though well-intentioned, tightens the budget constraint — which, ironically, leaves the government with less room to hire.

The consequences for India's reservation policy are painful. Affirmative action can only function if the government is actually hiring. When recruitment slows, reserved posts go unfilled. SC employees in Central government fell by 47% in absolute numbers between 2003 and 2021. The very communities that reservation was designed to lift — Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs — see their representation erode. When one generation gains a government post, the next generation climbs higher; that intergenerational ladder breaks when the post is never filled. It is no coincidence that the scarcity of government posts has intensified demands for reservation from communities not traditionally covered, such as Marathas in Maharashtra, or Gujjars in Rajasthan. Conflict over reservation shares is, at its root, a symptom of an economy failing to create enough good jobs.

The policy prescription follows from the diagnosis. Reduce search frictions through better labour market information, job portals, and portable apprenticeship schemes that benefit both employers and workers. Fix skills mismatch through employer-driven, not certificate-driven, training. Critically, reduce the enormous premium on government employment through rationalised pay, fixed-term contracts, and wider staffing structures.

Eleven million educated young Indians are today squandering the most productive years of their lives in a lottery they will almost certainly lose. The waiting room has become a national institution. That is a waste of individual lives and of public investment in education. We cannot afford to let our demographic dividend rot in a coaching class or waiting room.

The writer is a noted economist. ©THE BILLION PRESS

To hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition.



SRI AUROBINDO

## Not Forgetting Myanmar

While a big war is being waged in the Middle East, global attention has moved away from another theatre of genocidal war and ethnic cleansing. The perpetrators are taking full advantage of the situation. Myanmar's military chief Min Aung Hlaing has been nominated for the presidency as parliament convened 30 March following what is being seen as a sham general election from which the biggest Opposition parties were excluded. Hlaing is certain to be chosen, as he was nominated in parliament alongside two loyalists who are very unlikely contenders for President. He has been sanctioned by many Western countries for leading a military coup five years ago. The country's upper House will also nominate a vice-presidential candidate, with both Houses to select a President from the three in a later vote. A date for that vote has not been announced. The controversial election was held in December and January amid raging conflict and the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party won. But it was widely mocked at by the United Nations and many Western countries.

Myanmar has been witnessing violence since the 2021 coup in which the military, known as the Tatmadaw, did not allow the democratically elected government of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi to take charge. As per the country's constitution, only civilians can qualify for the presidential post. For this reason Hlaing handed over the position of commander-in-chief of the armed forces to his die-hard loyalist Ye Win Oo, a veteran officer. Ye Win Oo was appointed Myanmar's intelligence chief in 2020 and was promoted to commander-in-chief of the army earlier this month. His double promotion in such a short span of time clearly demonstrates the confidence Hlaing reposes on him. There are some risks for Hlaing after he relinquishes his army position since he will have no direct say in the affairs of the military. But the risk is worth taking since the junta under his loyalist will still be running the show and bombing civilians, while he can have the pretence of being an elected leader of the country.

He had long set his eyes on becoming the country's President, even though Myanmar's raging civil war has severely damaged the military's prestige. Large areas of the country remain under the control of armed opposition groups. Despite the claim by the junta that the recent general elections were a pathway to peace, the vote was widely regarded as a mockery of democracy with many popular parties banned from contesting and large areas of the country not allowed to participate in voting because of the civil war.

The Israel-US war against Iran has overshadowed the sufferings of the people in Myanmar where estimates put the number of people killed by the junta since 2021 as 93,000 or more, while the UN says that 3.6 million are displaced. The unpopularity of the junta became clear in the 2020 election when the party floated by it won just 6 per cent of the vote.

However, things appeared to be turning favourable for the junta recently following fractures within opposition forces comprising fighters aligned with the exiled National Unity Government, ethnic armed groups and other resistance organisations.

Myanmar stands out as an example of rule by military forces with an iron hand and resistance groups trying to use the country's natural resources and provide services to the people. While the generals want a veneer of democracy to ease international pressure, opposition-run local administrations have not yet given up on democracy even though they are increasingly becoming battle-weary. In such a situation the outside world needs to pile pressure on the junta and not to be distracted for far too long by other events of equally great importance.



Ajit Ranade

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LET OUR DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND ROT IN A COACHING CLASS OR WAITING ROOM

SPECTRUM WAR CRIMES

## The responsibility to protect

In 2005, the United Nations World Summit, attended by more than 170 heads of state and government, made a political commitment to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. But in endorsing the Responsibility to Protect, or R2P, did they also clear a legal path to the US-Israeli war against Iran?

According to R2P, all states are responsible for protecting people from mass-atrocity crimes. The responsibility falls first on governments to protect their own citizens. If, however, they are powerless to do so, or are encouraging or carrying out the crimes themselves, R2P obliges other states, under specified conditions, to prevent such atrocities.

The decision to endorse R2P stems from the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when extremist elements of the majority Hutu population attempted to eliminate the minority Tutsi population and Hutus who opposed the slaughter. In the aftermath, Kofi A. Annan, later UN secretary-general, asked whether, in the period leading up to the genocide, a coalition of states willing and able to prevent it should have stood idly by because the Security Council had

not approved intervention.

A recent essay in The New York Times seeks to link R2P to the ongoing war against Iran. The author implies that we face a dire choice: either we answer Annan's question affirmatively and say that, yes, his hypothetical coalition should have stood idly by while 800,000 Tutsis were massacred, or we say that it should have acted — and by implication accept what the US and Israel are doing to Iran. But that is not the choice we face.

To be sure, one could argue that the Iranian government's slaughter of protesters in January — Amnesty International estimates put the death toll at between 5,000 and 20,000 or more, and even the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei admitted to a death toll in the "thousands" — should have compelled a robust international response. But President Donald Trump's administration has not sought to justify the US-Israeli strikes on Iran in terms of human-rights protection, atrocity prevention, or even international law. Instead, the administration's purported justifications for its actions — however inconsistent and shifting — have centered on claims of self-defence. At various points, US officials have referenced threats,

deterrence, and strategic objectives. Some of its rhetoric has veered toward regime change.

The premise that R2P somehow provided the intellectual pathway for the US and Israel to attack Iran is based on a misunderstanding of R2P. At its core, R2P is not a doctrine about the general protection of citizens or human rights. R2P is explicitly anchored not in vague humanitarian concerns, but in the protection of populations from the four specific crimes mentioned above — the most conscience-shocking forms of violence punishable under international law. It creates no new exceptions to international law but rather builds upon existing legal obligations, including the Genocide Convention's duty to prevent and punish.

The argument that R2P creates a permissive environment for intervention might have resonated in the immediate aftermath of the intervention in Libya in 2011. But the trajectory since then has been very different. At a time when atrocity crimes continue to occur — from Gaza to Sudan to Myanmar — the central challenge facing the international community is not an excess of intervention justified under R2P. It is the persistent failure to mobilize collective ac-

tion to protect populations from the gravest crimes under international law. R2P did not create a loophole in international law. On the contrary, it was designed to ensure restraint, legitimacy, and accountability when the international community confronts mass-atrocity crimes.

Today, the real challenge is that states have too often responded selectively to violations of international law — condemning some acts while remaining silent when their partners or allies are implicated in similar conduct. This inconsistency risks creating an atmosphere of permissiveness in which unlawful actions are tolerated rather than confronted. What is needed is more serious engagement, from the Security Council down, with the R2P framework — and with the difficult political realities that continue to prevent the international community from fulfilling the responsibilities it has already endorsed.

Peter Singer is Emeritus Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. Savita Paundray is Executive Director at City University of New York's Graduate Center. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.

ROBERT FROST

Things are as they are. Looking out into it the universe at night, we make no comparisons between right and wrong stars, nor between well and badly arranged constellations.

ALAN WATTS

The whole difference between construction and creation is exactly this: that a thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed; but a thing created is loved before it exists.

CHARLES DICKENS

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1596: French mathematician, scientist, and philosopher René Descartes, widely considered the father of modern philosophy and perhaps best known for the famous phrase "I think, therefore I am," was born.
- 1889: The 984-foot (300-meter) Eiffel Tower, a wrought iron technological masterpiece created by Gustave Eiffel to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution, was officially inaugurated in Paris.
- 1918: U.S. implements Daylight Saving Time. Pres. Woodrow Wilson's Standard Time Act went into effect, which advanced clocks by an hour. Also called "war time" because of its implementation during World War I, the time change was designed to conserve fuel by reducing the need for artificial light. However, daylight saving was largely unpopular; groups that rose early, such as farmers, were its harshest critics. After being implemented and repealed in various forms over the years, in 1966 the government set the Universal Time Act, which standardized Daylight Saving Time nationwide.
- 1943: Oklahoma! debuted on Broadway. The first of 11 musicals written by the iconic team of composer Richard Rodgers and lyricist and librettist Oscar Hammerstein II, Oklahoma! launched a golden age of American musical comedy that lasted through the 1950s.
- 1964: Following a coup d'etat, a military dictatorship takes charge in Brazil. The regime under Humberto Castelo Branco suppressed the left-wing opposition, leading to widespread social unrest and strike action, especially in 1968.

LOL

### HORSE PULLS THE CAR

An out-of-towner drove his car into a ditch in a desolated area. Luckily, a local farmer came to help with his big strong horse named Buddy. He hitched Buddy up to the car and yelled, "Pull, Nellie, pull." Buddy didn't move. Then the farmer hollered, "Pull, Buster, pull." Buddy didn't respond. Once more the farmer commanded, "Pull, Jennie, pull." Nothing. Then the farmer nonchalantly said,

"Pull, Buddy, pull." And the horse easily dragged the car out of the ditch. The motorist was most appreciative and very curious. He asked the farmer why he called his horse by the wrong name three times. The farmer said, "Oh, Buddy is blind, and if he thought he was the only one pulling, he wouldn't even try!"



Peter Singer & Savita Paundray

TODAY, THE REAL CHALLENGE IS THAT STATES HAVE TOO OFTEN RESPONDED SELECTIVELY TO VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Persistent vacancies

Sir, The persistent teacher vacancies across government schools and colleges expose a grave systemic neglect undermining education quality. When classrooms lack qualified teachers, students suffer from irregular instruction, poor conceptual clarity, and declining academic outcomes. In Odisha, many institutions function with skeletal staff, overburdening existing teachers and weakening accountability. Despite repeated assurances, recruitment processes remain slow and inefficient. Education, being the foundation of social progress, cannot be compromised by administrative apathy. The government must expedite transparent hiring, ensure subject-wise postings, and prioritize long-term planning. Without urgent corrective measures, an entire generation risks losing its rightful opportunity to quality education.  
Sidhartha Kar Mohapatra, BARIPADA

### Divided nation

Sir, Recent "No Kings" protests against US President Donald Trump reflect rising anger over his policies on war, deportation, and strong leadership style. Large demonstrations in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, led by students and civil rights groups, accuse him of centralising power and weakening democratic norms. However, many Americans, especially outside big cities, support his strict stance on immigration and security, showing a divided nation. For the Indian diaspora, this creates uncertainty. Tighter visa rules and deportation policies may affect jobs and stay, though their skills remain valuable. Overall, the situation may deepen US divisions while pushing India to strengthen its economy and safeguard its people abroad.  
RS Narula, PATIALA

### National sentiment

Sir, Thanks to the BCCI as it decided not to feature the customary opening ceremony for the IPL this year, and instead prioritised humanitarian concerns, remembering the loss of 11 lives during the stampede at the Chinnaswamy stadium on 4 June last year. Also, as a mark of respect, 11 seats at the stadium were left permanently unoccupied, symbolizing the lives lost. In fact, in 2019, following the Pulwama attack, the board similarly scrapped the IPL opening ceremony and redirected the allocated funds to support the families of the martyred CRPF personnel. Such decisions highlight the BCCI's willingness to align cricketing events with broader national sentiment and empathy.  
Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI



# Chhattisgarh leads in rural housing

DURING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR (FY26), 5.87 LAKH HOUSES WERE COMPLETED UNDER PMAY-G, AROUND 13,000 UNDER PM JANMAN YOJANA, AND OVER 10,000 UNDER MUKHYAMANTRI AWAS YOJANA, TOGETHER, THESE EFFORTS HAVE TAKEN THE TOTAL TALLY BEYOND SIX LAKH HOUSES



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Raipur, March 30:** Chhattisgarh has set a new benchmark in rural housing by completing over six lakh houses in the financial year 2025-26, the highest in the country, a state government official said Monday. The achievement reflects a focused push on delivery, with coordinated schemes ensuring that eligible families across the state receive housing support within a defined timeline, he said. Under the guidance of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and his deputy Vijay Sharma, the progress was driven by coordinated implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), PM JANMAN Yojana (both central schemes) and Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana, the official maintained. These alignments of schemes have helped speed up execution

and extend coverage, he noted. "To achieve the goal of 'housing for all', 18 lakh houses were approved in the first cabinet decision of the present government (which assumed office in December 2023). All eligible beneficiaries identified in the survey list have now been covered, ensuring no deserving family is left out," the official said. "During the current financial year (FY26), 5.87 lakh houses were completed under PMAY-G, around 13,000 under PM JANMAN Yojana, and over 10,000 under Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana. Together, these efforts have taken the total tally beyond six lakh houses," he added. This is the highest number of houses completed in a single financial year in the state since the launch of the scheme (PMAY-G) in 2016, reflecting steady monitoring and time-

bound implementation, according to the official. Chief Minister Sai insisted the achievement marks a major milestone and reflects his government's commitment to ensuring that no eligible family is deprived of housing. "The core objective of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana is to meet this basic need (of housing). A permanent house is not just a structure of walls and a roof, but the foundation of security, stability and a dignified life for a family," he noted. The CM asserted the state government is implementing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "housing for all" with full commitment. Effective coordination of related schemes and close monitoring at every level have helped speed up construction while maintaining quality standards. The Chief Minister affirmed special attention is being given

# Fast track court begins daily hearing of Garg's death case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 30:** The first hearing of the fast-track Sessions Court, set up by the Gauhati High Court for day-to-day trial proceedings in singer Zubeen Garg's death case, was held Monday, with the counsel for arrested singer Amritprava Mahanta making a submission on her behalf.

Justice Sharmila Bhuyan heard Mahanta's lawyer, AK Bhuyan, while the counsels of two other accused, Shyamkanu Mahanta and Siddhartha Sharma, will present their cases Tuesday.

Shyamkanu Mahanta was the chief organiser of the North East India Festival in Singapore, while Sharma was Garg's secretary.

Garg died in Singapore September 19 last year while swimming in the sea. The 52-year-old singer had gone to the Southeast Asian nation to perform in the 4th edition of the festival.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said in the state Assembly in November that Garg's death was a case of "plain and simple murder".

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Assam Police's CID probed into the death and filed its charge sheet before a local court here in December, naming seven accused. Four of them are facing murder charges.

The hearing in the case is being held by a "new court and in a new environment. We are happy that the hearing in the fast track court has started," Special Public Prosecutor Ziaul Kamar told reporters.



He said the Court took the prosecution's case details. "We explained the entire submission made so far and the charge," he said.

Kamar said that the court will take the prosecution's response only after hearing the discharge petitions of the accused persons.

"We had already prepared our responses to the charges, and now we will get more time to collect more material," he said. The Court also rejected the petition from Zubeen's Personal Security Officer (PSO) Nandeswar Borah, seeking his seized mobile phone back, he said.

"We objected to the petition, saying that it was a primary document and a case property. The court immediately rejected it," Kamar added.

The SIT had also filed a petition requesting that Sharma's bank account be sealed again, which the court will hear during the daily hearing.

Zubeen's wife Garima Saikia Garg said that the hearing will now be held daily and the "defence lawyer has asked for time as they always do". The court has said that the hearing will be "held daily in the morning and afternoon. So, we have hope that the proceedings will move fast with a good outcome expected soon," she said. "We have trust and faith in the law of the land. We come to the court with a positive mind, hoping everything turns out well for Zubeen and he gets what he rightfully deserves," she said. Garima said that Tuesday is going to be an important day as both Mahanta and Sharma's petitions will be heard. "We are waiting to hear what their lawyers will put forward, following which the prosecution will reply. A new process has begun, and we are praying that everything turns out as expected so that Zubeen gets due justice," she added. The Gauhati High Court appointed an exclusive fast-track sessions court March 16, and the state government provided the logistical support for setting it up.

# Ch'garh: Sai launches flight services from Ambikapur to Delhi, Kolkata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Raipur, March 30:** Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai Monday virtually launched flight services from Ambikapur to Delhi and Kolkata, and stated that the government has been working to ensure air connectivity to major cities in the state, and making air travel accessible to common people. Sai launched the flight service of Alliance Air virtually from a programme held at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose State Police Academy in Chandkhuri village of Raipur district. Ambikapur is the headquarters of the Surguja district and division. The chief minister said that the new service was made possible through the efforts of local public representatives and noted that direct connectivity with Delhi and Kolkata will boost trade, tourism, and economic activities in the region. The aviation services are being steadily expanded across the state, he said. The night landing facility

at Bilaspur airport began operations Sunday, Sai said, adding that provisions have been made in the budget under the Chhattisgarh Viability Assistance for Yatri Udaan (CG-VAYU) scheme to ensure smooth operation of domestic flights. Cargo services at Raipur airport will further help local products reach national and international markets, he said. Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said that the operation of a 72-seater aircraft from Ambikapur (Darima) will significantly strengthen connectivity between Delhi, Ambikapur, and Kolkata. According to officials, Alliance Air will operate flights four days a week, providing convenient two-way travel options and improving connectivity in the Bilaspur region as well. Flights to Delhi will be scheduled Mondays and Wednesdays, while those to Kolkata will fly Thursdays and Saturdays from Maa Mahamaya Airport, Darima (Ambikapur), they said. Ambikapur is an administra-

tive, educational, and commercial hub in north Chhattisgarh, rich in natural resources, forests, and minerals. The region also has strong tourism potential with destinations like Mainpat and Tatapani, they said. With the launch of this service, the Surguja region will now be directly connected to the national capital, boosting business opportunities, investment, and market access for local products. Spread over 365 acres, Maa Mahamaya Airport has been developed under the Central government's Regional Connectivity Scheme (UDAN). Constructed in 1950, this airstrip underwent expansion, extending the runway from 1,500 meters to 1,800 meters. Consequently, larger aircraft - such as ATRs - can now operate here. A sum of Rs 48.25 crore was sanctioned for the airport's civil and electrification works, ensuring that construction and development activities were executed in strict compliance with DGCA standards, officials said.



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, centre, in a group photograph as he unveils the statue of Bharat Ratna and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during the inauguration ceremony of 'Atal Parisar', in Bilaspur district

# Chhattisgarh CM calls for tech-driven, citizen-centric policing

The chief minister stated that his government has been working on three key pillars - security, development, and trust - and the police play a vital role in strengthening all three.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Raipur, March 30:** Sensitivity coupled with modern technology is a feature of new-age policing, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said Monday, emphasising that gaining public trust is as important as maintaining law and order. Sai was speaking at the passing-out parade of 859 sub-inspector cadre trainees at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose State Police Academy in Chandkhuri village in Raipur district. The chief minister stated that his government has been working on three key pillars - security, development, and trust - and the police play a vital role in strengthening all three. Describing police service

Policing should go beyond enforcing law and order, he emphasised, urging officers to connect with society and win people's confidence. "While an area can be controlled through fear, hearts can only be won through trust," he said. As many as 859 trainees, including 54 subedars, 528 sub-inspectors (general duty), two sub-inspectors (computer), one sub-inspector (radio), one sub-inspector (fingerprint), 68 sub-inspectors (special branch), and 205 platoon commanders, completed their training in this batch. Sai referred to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and noted that efforts are underway to build a smart, technology-driven, and sensitive policing system across the country. While future policing will rely on digital tools and advanced technologies, public trust can only be earned through conduct, integrity, and dedication, he said. Describing police service



as prestigious and highly responsible, the chief minister said integrity is its foundation and reminded the trainees that the police's primary duty is to protect citizens, as people turn to them first in times of insecurity. "The uniform is not just a symbol of authority, but a

"Training systems have also been made more practical and modern. Policing in the future will evolve from a reactive force to a proactive, service-oriented agency," he said. Sai said that the country is currently undergoing a phase of historic transformation, wherein new laws - the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam - have been implemented to replace colonial-era laws. He noted that this is the first batch of sub-inspectors trained under the new legal framework and expressed confidence that they will strengthen the justice system. Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Vijay Sharma said the newly trained officers would further strengthen the state police force and urged them to ensure an environment where criminals fear the law and citizens trust the police. Sai inspected the parade, took the salute, and congratulated the officers on the successful completion of their training.

# Assam Assembly polls EVM commissioning to begin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 30:** The commissioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for next month's Assam Assembly elections will commence from Tuesday across all 126 constituencies.

The commissioning process will be carried out at the premises notified by the respective District Election Officers (DEOs) with the support of authorised engineers and technical staff from Electronics Corporation of India Ltd (ECIL), according to an official statement.

"The entire process will be conducted in the presence of contesting candidates and/or their authorised representatives, ensuring full transparency and adherence to the guidelines of the Election Commission of India," the statement said.

A total of 41,353 Ballot Units (BUs), 45,572 Control Units (CUs) and 44,830 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units will undergo commissioning. This includes reserve EVMs

comprising 9,863 BUs, 14,082 CUs, and 13,340 VVPATs. There will be 31,490 polling stations across the state for 2.51 crore electors to cast their votes. "As part of the process, symbol loading in each VVPAT will be carried out using the Symbol Loading Unit (SLU). The symbols loaded into the VVPATs will be simultaneously displayed on monitor/TV screens for verification by the contesting candidates and their representatives," the statement from the Chief Electoral Officer said. To enhance transparency and build confidence in the electoral process, candidates or their representatives will be allowed to randomly select up to five per cent of the EVMs and VVPATs for conducting mock polls, it added. "The commissioning of EVMs is a crucial step in the election preparedness process and is being undertaken with utmost care to ensure accuracy, transparency and integrity of the electoral process," the CEO Office said.

**While the Congress could not form the government (in Kerala) on its own last time despite a good performance, electoral outcomes are part of the democratic process**

**ASHOK GEHLOT | SENIOR CONG LEADER**

## EC TO OFFER 'HALWA' TO 1ST-TIME VOTERS IN KERALA

First-time voters casting their franchise in the April 9 Assembly polls in Kerala will receive 'halwa' under an innovative Election Commission initiative. Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Rathan U Kelkar has announced a special drive titled Vote Sweetened Kerala Campaign' to encourage youth participation in the upcoming polls



### of the day uote

We examine its feasibility and weigh its advantages and disadvantages. If the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, we do not oppose it

**OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM**

Today I visited the Assembly and felt good. It especially reminded me of my father (Mufti Mohd Sayeed)...our Assembly is a very important institution. However, its value and authority have, in one way or another, been diminished since 2019

**MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT**

The government is ensuring that not a single child is left out of education

**YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM**



Riders showcase their skills in the Babu RN Singh Memorial Horse Racing Competition, organised by Vikas Intermediate College, at Parmanandpur village in Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh

## Indian Navy gets three new ships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** The Indian Navy Monday received three new ships constructed by state-run Garden Reach Shipbuilding and Engineers Ltd (GRSE).

The ships -- Dunagiri, Sanshodhak and Agray -- are expected to significantly enhance the Navy's overall combat prowess.

Dunagiri is the fifth ship of Nilgiri class under Project 17A, and second of the class. The ships built under Project 17A are versatile multi-mission platforms, designed to address current and future challenges in the maritime domain.

The ship is a reincarnation of the erstwhile INS Dunagiri, a Leander class frigate that was part of the Indian Navy's fleet from 1977 to 2010.

The vessel is integrated with potent weapons including BrahMos missiles, rockets and torpedoes, according to the Navy.

The state-of-the-art frigate reflects a quantum leap in naval design, stealth, firepower, automation and survivability and is an admirable symbol of India's self-reliance in warship building, it said.

The ship, Sanshodhak, is a survey vessel. It is capable of full scale coastal and deep-water hydrographic survey of ports. Its role also includes collecting oceanographic and geophysical data for defence and civil applications. With a displacement of about 3,400 tons and overall length 110 metres, Sanshodhak is fitted with state-of-the-art hydrographic equipment such as data acquisition and processing system, autonomous underwater vehicle, remotely operated vehicle and digital side scan sonar.

# LeT handler Shabir Ahmed Lone held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** The Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested a suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) handler, Shabir Ahmed Lone, from the Ghazipur area here, officials said Monday.

After his arrest, he was produced before a court, which sent him to five days of police custody.

Terming Lone as a "hardcore and highly-trained terrorist," the police said that he reportedly established links with handlers operating on behalf of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

"Lone, also known by aliases Raja and Kashmiri, is a resident of Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir and was allegedly operating as the handler of a recently busted module involved in pasting anti-national posters across multiple locations in Delhi and Kolkata," a senior police officer said.

According to the officer, a team from the New Delhi Range of the Special Cell arrested Lone on March 29 in connection with the LeT module that had recently been unearthed in the metro poster case on February 22.

"During the arrest, police recovered multiple foreign currencies and other incriminating material from his possession. These included approximately 2,300 units of Bangladeshi Taka, 1,400 units of Nepalese currency, 5,000 units of Pakistani currency, and 3,000 units of Indian currency," they said. A Nepalese SIM card was also seized, raising suspicions about cross-border communication and operational coordination.



**D**elhi Police arrested Shabir Ahmed Lone, a suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) handler, for allegedly running a terror module with links to Pakistan's ISI

**L**one is accused of orchestrating the pasting of anti-national posters in Delhi and Kolkata and planning broader terror activities across India

**L**one has a history of terror involvement, including previous arrests and training in LeT camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

**T**he investigation revealed Lone's connections to handlers in Pakistan and Bangladesh, highlighting a cross-border terror network

**R**ecovered foreign currencies and a Nepalese SIM card suggest international coordination and funding for the LeT module

nation. "The module was being run at the behest of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), with Lone acting as a key conduit between handlers based abroad and operatives on the ground in India," the officer said.

Lone had a long history of involvement in terror activities and had been previously arrested in 2007. At that time, an AK-47 rifle and a hand grenade were recovered from his possession. He was again arrested in 2015 in Srinagar under the jurisdiction of Parimpora Police Station.

The officer also said that even during his earlier arrest, Lone had come to Delhi with the intent to carry out targeted killings. He is a highly trained

operative who has undergone terror training "Daura-e-Aam" (basic terror training) and "Daura-e-Khaas" (advanced terror training) from the Muzafrabad LeT camp in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Following his release, he allegedly fled to Bangladesh and began rebuilding a fresh terror network targeting India.

During his stay in Bangladesh, Lone reportedly established links with new handlers affiliated with LeT. These handlers, identified by their code names Abu Huzafa and Sumama Babar, were operating on behalf of the ISI.

Lone's task was to resume terror activities in India by activating sleeper cells and recruiting fresh operatives.

## WEST ASIA CONFLICT

# MEA: 8 Indians lost their lives in 'various incidents'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** Amid the escalating West Asia conflict, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Monday said eight Indian nationals have lost their lives while one remains missing in "various incidents" in the region.

At an inter-ministerial briefing here on the West Asia situation, Additional Secretary (Gulf), MEA, Aseem R Mahajan, also said, "Yesterday, an Indian national unfortunately lost his life in an attack in Kuwait."

However, he did not elaborate upon the circumstances of this death. "We express our deepest condolences to the family of the deceased. Our Mission in Kuwait is in touch with the family of the deceased and is coordinating closely with the local authorities to render all support and for early return of his mortal remains to India," he said.

On March 20, at an inter-ministerial briefing on the West Asia situation, Mahajan had told reporters that six Indian nationals had lost their lives while one remained missing in "various incidents".

On Monday, he shared an update, saying, "eight Indian nationals have unfortunately lost their lives and one Indian national remains missing in various incidents".

The Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia recently said that an Indian national was killed in Riyadh due to the "recent events of March 18". The ministry also shared that since February 28, around 5.5 lakh passengers have returned from the region to India. The MEA Monday reiterated that it continues to closely monitor the evolving situation in the Gulf and West Asia region.

"We continue to call for restraint and de-escalation, and at the same time emphasise on



## 'Govt ready with corrective steps'

**T**he government has taken a host of measures to mitigate external risks, support the balance of payments, and maintain macroeconomic stability amid the ongoing West Asia crisis, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said Monday. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Chaudhary said the government is consistently reviewing and closely monitoring the economic impact of the ongoing West Asia conflict at the highest levels and taking immediate corrective and facilitative measures as warranted.

dialogue and diplomacy, as a means to an early end to the conflict," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

He also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, March 28, spoke to the Crown Prince and PM of Saudi Arabia, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and discussed with him the ongoing conflict in West Asia and agreed on the need to ensure freedom of navigation.

In his telephonic conversation, the prime minister also reiterated India's condemnation of attacks on regional energy infrastructure.

Mahajan said safety, security and welfare of the large Indian community in the region remains "our utmost priority".

The CBSE has already notified the assessment scheme for the declaration of results of Class X and Class XII in the region, following the cancellation of exams due to the ongoing conflict.

## Patanjali Yogpeeth marks 32nd Sanyas Diwas of Ramdev



AGENCIES

**Haridwar, March 30:** Patanjali Yogpeeth marked 32nd Sanyas Diwas of its founder Ramdev on the auspicious day of Ram Navami. The ceremony took place at Yog Bhavan auditorium in Patanjali Yogpeeth in Haridwar.

Saints, scholars, educators, and members of the Patanjali family filled the auditorium creating an atmosphere of devotion and reflection. The organisers described the day as a rare alignment of spiritual milestones.

Addressing the audience, Ramdev called it a moment of "deep spiritual alignment and national pride". He noted that three sacred occasions were being celebrated together. Looking back at the past 32 years, Ramdev spoke about the organisation's journey. He highlighted its work in education, healthcare, research, agriculture, industry, employment generation, environmental protection, character building, and nation-building.

*Delivering a speech titled "Pointers for Hon'ble the Chief Justice's Talk" at Leh, Justice Kant highlighted the symbiotic relationship between the judiciary and the armed forces, stating that while courts safeguard constitutional values, it is the soldiers who create the conditions necessary for those ideals to endure*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** Highlighting the role of armed forces, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has said the country must not compel them to "fight two battles at once", one at the

# CJI urges better judicial access for soldiers

border and another at home for their legal rights, calling for better judicial access for soldiers.

Delivering a speech titled "Pointers for Hon'ble the Chief Justice's Talk" Sunday at Leh, Justice Kant highlighted the symbiotic relationship between the judiciary and the armed forces, stating that while courts safeguard constitutional values, it is the soldiers who create the conditions necessary for those ideals to endure.

Against the backdrop of the serene yet rugged Himalayan landscape, the CJI began his address by paying homage to the bravery of soldiers and made a special reference to the 1962 battle of Rezang La,



recalling the sacrifice of Major Shaitan Singh Bhati and the 114 soldiers of Charlie Company, 13 Kumaon.

"While the Constitution speaks in the language of rights, dignity, equality, and justice, entire credit for the same goes to you for securing the conditions in which those

promises are able to survive for the people of India," he said.

Referring to the difficulties faced by soldiers, he said the service in uniform does not exempt one from the ordinary burdens of life, and a soldier may still face a land dispute.

This is not only a matter of

sympathy but rather a constitutional duty, he said, adding that if the institutions of the State cannot ensure timely legal support to those who stand guard over the integrity of the nation, then they fall short of their own moral and constitutional responsibilities.

The CJI then referred to the 'Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana' launched to provide free legal aid, assistance and support services to serving defence personnel, ex-servicemen, their dependent family members, and members of the Paramilitary Forces and CAPFs when he was the executive head of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA). He said conceiving and enacting the scheme for

armed forces was one of the greatest highlights as the executive chairman of NALSA. He said so far, 14,929 beneficiaries have been assisted nationwide, and 438 Legal Services Clinics have been made operational, including all 34 Rajya Sainik Boards and 404 Zila Sainik Boards.

Under the scheme, resolution of issues ranging from property disputes and pension delays to matrimonial discord and school admissions has been undertaken, he said.

Concluding the address, the CJI assured the forces, saying, "You guard the nation at her frontiers. It is the duty of the nation's institutions to ensure that they guard all your interests arduously."



We want to work for the people living in Assam -- the Assamese, Bengali and Hindi speaking people, Gorkhas, tribals, all communities. All the communities are in harmony because the BJP is in power

INDIA, RUSSIA DISCUSS WEST ASIA CRISIS

India and Russia Monday explored ways to further expand their already close strategic partnership against the backdrop of the West Asia crisis and its economic fallout



of the day note

Akhilesh Yadav, driven by superstition, never visited Noida in the past. Now on the very same soil, the double engine government has inaugurated the Noida International Airport

If anyone can show what Mahato did in all these years, if anyone can tell me what the four BJP MLAs did for the people. They only tell lies and try to create a rift between Hindus and Muslims

Our assurance to the youth of Assam is employment. With a lot of difficulties, they complete their education here. Many of them then go to the southern states, Mumbai and Delhi for employment

TN POLL BATTLE HEATS UP

Stalin, Vijay file nominations



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, March 30: Chief Minister M K Stalin and TVK chief Vijay filed their nominations Monday for the April 23 Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, marking a charged beginning to the electoral battle as campaigning gathered fierce momentum ahead of the high-stakes political showdown in the state.

Seeking a fourth consecutive mandate from Kolathur, Stalin struck a confident note after filing his papers, projecting an emphatic victory and continuity of governance.

Vijay, who entered the fray from the working-class stronghold of Perambur, attacked the DMK over the law and order situation and "rising unemployment." The actor-politician also urged voters to give his party a decisive opportunity.

SEEKING A FOURTH CONSECUTIVE MANDATE FROM KOLATHUR, STALIN STRUCK A CONFIDENT NOTE AFTER FILING HIS PAPERS, PROJECTING AN EMPHATIC VICTORY AND CONTINUITY OF GOVERNANCE

VIJAY, WHO ENTERED THE FRAY FROM THE WORKING-CLASS STRONGHOLD OF PERAMBUR, ATTACKED THE DMK OVER THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION AND "RISING UNEMPLOYMENT"

positions in coins to arriving at returning officers' offices in bullock carts. Adding to the intensifying contest, Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin kick-started his campaign from Kanchipuram, asserting that the election is a battle to drive out AIADMK chief Palaniswami and prevent Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah from gaining a toe-hold in the state.

Launching his campaign here in the native town of DMK founder leader CN Annadurai (1909-1969), Udhayanidhi, addressing a massive rally, recalled his father and party chief

MK Stalin's statement that the ensuing poll was a fight between TN and Delhi and asserted that the BJP must not be allowed. Alleging that the AIADMK chief Palaniswami is PM Modi's "slave", Udhayanidhi claimed that the Leader of Opposition's "ideological mentors are PM Modi and Amit Shah".

Hence, the Assembly election is all about "driving out" AIADMK chief Palaniswami, Can we allow PM Modi, Amit Shah in Tamil Nadu?" he asked, adding people would not allow it.

Further, he said: "In this election, we must prove that Tamil Nadu is always out of Delhi's control. Tamil Nadu must completely sideline BJP, which is betraying the state; this must be done."

He listed out the DMK regime's welfare schemes, including CM's Breakfast Scheme and fare-free bus travel scheme for women. Senior DMK leader Kanimozhi slammed what she described as attempts to dub welfare schemes as "freebies" and asserted that initiatives like fare-free bus travel for women were "social investment, aimed at securing social justice".

Rahul bats for woman CM in Kerala, rides bicycle



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kottayam (Kerala), March 30: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Monday drew loud cheers from the crowd when he said he was looking forward to Kerala having a woman chief minister.

Addressing a rally in Puthuppally here, Gandhi spoke about the guarantees announced by the Congress if it comes to power, including free KSRTC bus travel for women and a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 for college-going girl students.

He said the Congress wants women to be active participants in Kerala's development.

"In fact, we are looking forward to the day when we have a woman chief minister of Kerala," he said, drawing a loud response from the crowd.

He also remarked that men were not clapping enough for the statement.

"We want women of Kerala to fulfil their dreams. Whatever they want to do, we want them to succeed," he said.

He said the Congress would ensure that women have the freedom to go wherever they want and pursue the jobs they choose. "For this purpose, our guarantees include free travel for women in KSRTC buses," he said.

No woman has so far been elevated to the post of Chief Minister in Kerala, despite prominent leaders, including K R Gouri Amma, playing significant roles in the state's politics.

In this election, the Congress has fielded only nine women candidates out of 92, while UDF allies, the Indian Union Muslim League, have fielded two women candidates, and KK Rama of the Revolutionary Marxist Party is also contesting the April 9 poll.

J'khand HC takes suo motu cognisance of girl's 'rape-murder'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi/Hazaribag, March 30:The Jharkhand High Court Monday took suo motu cognisance of the alleged rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl in Hazaribag district.

The court also served notices to the state home secretary, director, general of police and Hazaribag superintendent of police to respond in the matter.

The court of Justice Sujit Narayan Prasad and Justice Anubha Rawat Choudhary took cognisance of a newspaper report of March 29 about the rape and brutal murder of the victim.

Advocate Hemant Kumar Shikarwar took up the matter in court and informed the bench that no arrest has been made by the police as yet. He said that the mother of the victim, who is a daily wagger in a brick kiln, is being threatened to tamper with evidence in the case.

The high court, considering the sensitivity of the issue, particularly the commission of rape on a female child and causing injury to her body parts, particularly her private parts and her tongue, took serious note of the matter.

The court directed the Hazaribag SP to appear online, upon which SP Anjani Anjan appeared through virtual mode.

Anjan informed that no arrest has been made and an investigation is being conducted.

The court directed the SP to specifically explain why, even after five days of lodging of the FIR, the culprit has not been arrested. According to police, the girl had gone with her mother to watch the 'Mangla' procession, a rally taken out as part of Ram Navami rituals, at her native village under Bishnugarh police station limits on the night of March 24.

Govt releases FAQs for Census phase 1



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: If a live-in couple considers their relationship as a "stable union", they should be treated as "married" for the 16th Census, according to the FAQ section on the self-enumeration portal.

The portal, opened for people opting for self-enumeration, will be available for both phases of the Census - 'Householding and Housing Census' and 'Population Enumeration'. It has an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section to help people answer the queries in the Census.

One such FAQ was on live-in relationships. "Will a couple in a live-in relationship be considered a married couple?" The Answer: "If they consider their relationship as a stable union, they should be treated as a married couple." The section provides guidance on several tricky questions, such as "My house has different flooring materials in different rooms. There is only one option to select under 'material of floor'.

Which one should I select?"

"If different rooms have different flooring, record the material used predominantly. For example: If only the drawing room has mosaic but all other rooms have cement, record 'Cement'. If only the bathroom has cement but all other rooms have tiles or mosaic, record 'Mosaic/Floor Tiles'," the FAQ section states. "If the house has marble flooring, but it is not listed in the options, then select 'Stone'."

It says. To the question, "In my region, we use bamboo or Ekra for walls. But there is no such option listed for walls. Which option should I select then?" the FAQ section advises people to select the "Grass/thatch/bamboo etc" option.

Regarding the name of a caste or tribe that is not listed under the options, the FAQ reply suggests clicking the "Other" option.

It says that each state and Union Territory has its own notified list of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

THE PORTAL, OPENED FOR PEOPLE OPTING FOR SELF-ENUMERATION, WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR BOTH PHASES OF THE CENSUS - 'HOUSELISTING AND HOUSING CENSUS' AND 'POPULATION ENUMERATION'

Retired Army brigadier killed in cross-firing in Dehradun road rage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, March 30: A retired Army brigadier was killed here after he was caught in cross firing between two car occupants during a road rage incident Monday, police said.

The incident took place in Johri village on Mussoorie Road when an argument broke out between the occupants of a Delhi-registered Fortuner and a Scorpio N over giving way, they said.

As the argument escalated, the occupants in the Scorpio allegedly chased the Fortuner and opened fire at its tyres, but a bullet struck retired Army brigadier Mukesh Joshi (74), who was out for his morning walk, police said.

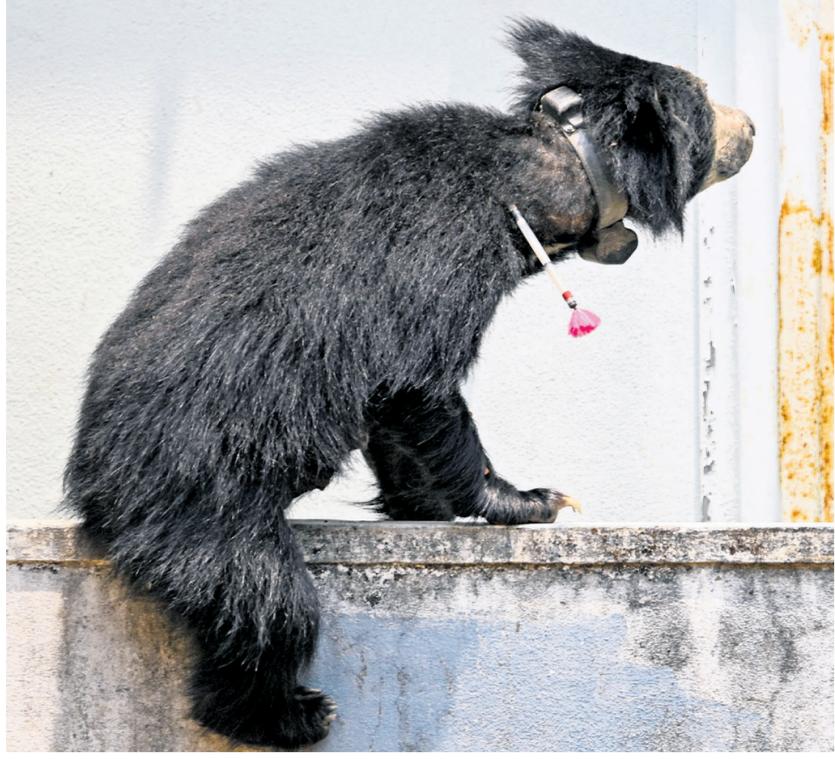
Joshi was taken to a hospital, where he died during treatment, they added.

According to the police, after a bullet hit the Fortuner's tyre, the driver lost control of the vehicle and crashed it into a roadside tree near the Government Primary School in Johri.

The occupants of the Scorpio then assaulted the people inside the Fortuner and vandalised the vehicle, police said.

Two occupants of the Fortuner were injured in the incident and were taken to a hospital by their co-passengers. After the incident, all the accused travelling in the Scorpio fled the scene, a senior police officer said.

Upon receiving information, Dehradun Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Pramendra Singh Dobal, along with other officials, visited the spot to take stock of the situation and then visited the hospital to gather details from the victims.



A sloth bear after being tranquilised during a rescue operation after it strayed into Shivamogga Airport area, in Shivamogga, Karnataka

Interfaith live-in relationship not an offence: Allahabad HC

"A live-in relation is neither prohibited nor punishable under any law. Therefore, considering Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India and the Act, 2021, it cannot be said that the live-in relationship of an interfaith couple is an offence," the court observed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj, March 30: The Allahabad High Court has held that an interfaith live-in relationship is neither prohibited nor an offence under any law, while granting protection to a couple facing threats from the woman's family.

Allowing a petition filed by Kajal Prajapati and her Muslim partner from Sonbhadra, Justice Vivek Kumar Singh observed that merely being in an interfaith relationship does not deprive individuals of their fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

"No discrimination can be



made on the basis of caste, creed, sex or religion," the court said. The couple had approached the court seeking protection from the woman's family, claiming that their pleas to police had gone unheeded.

The state government's counsel informed the court that the petitioners are majors and no

FIR has been registered against them for living together.

The court said the petitioners are at liberty to approach the police for redressal of their grievances in case any harm is caused to them. It further directed police to examine the matter and the age of the petitioners.

It directed that police must act in accordance with the law if they find any substance in the allegations of the petitioners. "A live-in relation is neither prohibited nor punishable under any law. Therefore, considering Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India and the Act, 2021, it cannot be said

that the live-in relationship of an interfaith couple is an offence," the court observed.

In its order dated March 18, the court reiterated that live-in relationships are neither illegal nor punishable.

"This court does not see the petitioners of different religions as Hindu and Muslim, rather as two grown-up individuals who, out of their own free will and choice, are living together peacefully and happily for a considerable time."

"Interference in a personal relationship would constitute a serious encroachment on the right to freedom of choice of the two individuals," it said.

POST OF THE DAY

SURAT IS FLASHING A WARNING TO INDIA. Thousands of migrant workers are now leaving the city as the global war begins hitting India's economy in real time. Not because jobs disappeared first—because LPG shortages made survival impossible. No gas to cook. Prices exploding. Textile units slowing. Families heading back to villages. Surat is India's textile engine. When workers flee here, it's not a local story. It's the first visible crack in the supply chain, labor, production, inflation cycle. First fuel. Then factories. Then freight. Then food and clothing prices. This is how a distant war quietly enters every Indian household.

@gaurav\_kochar

SHORT TAKES

Kejriwal's acquittal: ED moves Delhi HC

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Monday moved the Delhi High Court challenging the acquittal of former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in two separate cases lodged against him for not appearing before the agency despite summonses issued in the excise policy case. The ED's appeal against the trial court's January 22 orders is listed for hearing before Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma Wednesday.

Police take custody of Luthra siblings

Panaji: Mapusa police in Goa Monday took custody of Saurabh Luthra and Gaurav Luthra, arrested for the December 6 nightclub fire tragedy that killed 25 persons, in a case of alleged forgery to obtain an excise licence, an official said. The two, currently in Colvale central jail in North Goa, were taken into custody after the additional sessions court in Mapusa rejected their anticipatory bail petition. While Anjuna police is investigating the fire tragedy, Mapusa police registered a case of forgery against the Luthras for allegedly providing forged documents to obtain a licence from the excise department for the nightclub.

Zubeen case: Fast-track court begins hearing

Guwahati: The first hearing of the fast-track Sessions Court, set up by the Gauhati High Court for day-to-day trial proceedings in singer Zubeen Garg's death case, was held Monday, with the counsel for arrested singer Amritprava

of the day uote

In the longer perspective of the next three years, that was the wish of President al-Sharaa, about 80 per cent of the Syrians currently living in Germany should return to their homeland.

Pakistan is very happy that both Iran and the US have expressed their confidence in Pakistan to facilitate the talks.

We have a tanker out there. We don't mind having somebody get a boatload because they need them to survive

SHORT TAKES

Shanghai-Kolkata direct flight launched

Beijing: IndiGo airline Monday launched its daily flight from Shanghai to Kolkata boosting the air connectivity between India and China.

China sanctions Japanese lawmaker

Tokyo: China announced Monday that it is sanctioning a conservative Japanese lawmaker close to Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, accusing him of "colluding with" separatists in Taiwan.

Pak Dy PM Dar to visit China

Islamabad: Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has planned to undertake a visit to China Tuesday for discussions on bilateral ties and regional developments.

TRUMP ISSUES NEW WARNING TO TEHRAN

Iran calls US proposals 'unrealistic'

Tel Aviv/Washington/Islamabad, March 30: President Donald Trump warned Monday that Iran's energy plants and oil wells would be obliterated if it did not open the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's military said two drones from Yemen had also been intercepted Monday, two days after the Iran-aligned Houthis entered the war by firing missiles at Israel.

Iran remained defiant in the month-old war, which began with US-Israeli attacks on Iran February 28 and has spread across the region, killing thousands, disrupting energy supplies and hitting the global economy.



waterway which normally carries about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies.

Iran said Monday it had received US peace proposals via intermediaries, following talks Sunday between the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

reasonable regime" to end the war in Iran, but he also issued a new warning over the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump also threatened to attack the desalination plants that supply clean water in Iran. He said last week he would pause attacks on Iran's energy plants for 10 days, which would be until April 6, US time.

- Israel says Iran has launched waves of missiles
Israel says two drones from Yemen were intercepted
Israeli air force targets Iranian infrastructure
Iran's acting defence minister makes defiant statement
Trump urges Iran to unblock Strait of Hormuz

whose country is trying to mediate in the war, said that at this stage it appeared unlikely there would be direct US-Iran talks this week.

FEARS OF ESCALATION

Iran has fired on Arab Gulf states during the conflict and war has been reignited between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, where a UN peacekeeper from Indonesia was killed when a projectile exploded at one of its positions in southern Lebanon Sunday.

gotiated end to the war and "is bracing for a sharp escalation in military hostilities," said Vandana Hari of oil-market provider Vanda Insights.

Iran confirmed Monday the death of Revolutionary Guards Navy Commander Alireza Tangsiri, the latest of its leaders killed including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has been replaced by his son Mojtaba Khamenei.

Kuwait said Monday an Indian national was killed in an Iranian attack on a power and desalination plant in the country. Iran's Revolutionary Guards later denied involvement.

Hezbollah later said it had targeted the naval base. Indonesia's foreign ministry said Monday the deceased peacekeeper was one of its citizens and that three others were injured by "indirect artillery fire" in the vicinity of the Indonesian UNIFIL contingent's position near Adchit al-Qusayr.

MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF IN LINE FOR PRESIDENCY

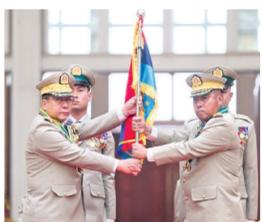
Military seeks to maintain power

Naypyidaw, March 30: Min Aung Hlaing stepped down as Myanmar's armed forces chief Monday to seek the presidency, the latest step in the generals' efforts to maintain power behind the facade of a civilian administration, five years after they led a coup against an elected government.

The move follows a controversial election held in December and January that was won by a military-backed party but widely derided as a sham by the United Nations and many Western countries.

The civil war, which continues to rage, has killed nearly 93,000 people, displaced more than 3.6 million people, and further damaged an already weak economy.

Despite the fighting, the junta organised new elections, which excluded Suu Kyi's party and other opposition groups, ensuring the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development



Party would sweep the polls. Min Aung Hlaing has long had his eyes on officially becoming president, even though the civil war has dented the military's prestige and hold over the country, Reuters has reported.

PATH TO THE PRESIDENCY

In the lower house of the newly convened parliament, Min Aung Hlaing - who had commanded Myanmar's armed forces since 2011 - was one of two people named as vice-presidential candidates by lawmakers.

The country's upper house will also nominate a vice-presidential candidate, with both houses to select a president from the three in a later vote. A date for that vote has not been announced.

Nepal's SC refuses interim relief to ex-PM Oli

Oli and former home minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested Saturday for their alleged involvement in suppressing the Gen Z movement of September 8 and 9 last year, in which 76 people were killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, March 30: Nepal's Supreme Court Monday refused to provide interim relief to former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, arrested over the 2025 Gen Z movement crackdown, even as protests continued in Nepal over his detention.

Oli and former home minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested Saturday for their alleged involvement in suppressing the Gen Z movement of September 8 and 9 last year, in which 76 people were killed.

In response to a habeas corpus petition filed by Oli's wife, Radhika Shakya, claiming her husband's detention is unlawful, a single bench of Justice Meghraj Pokharel refused to issue an interim order for Oli's release.

The apex court instead asked the authorities to submit a written explanation clarifying the legal grounds for his detention.

The court gave a similar rul-



ing to a habeas corpus petition filed on behalf of former home minister Ramesh Lekhak.

The arrests came after the newly formed Balendra Shah government decided to implement the report of the probe commission into the Gen Z protests in its first cabinet meeting.

Hundreds of members of Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Lennist) and their sister organisations and student wings gathered at Naya Baneshwor area Monday morning carrying placards that read "Immediately release KP Oli," and "End the politics of revenge."

Monday's protest rally was comparatively peaceful, unlike

the protests organised by the party on Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday, over a dozen UML cadres were injured as they clashed with the riot police.

Oli and Lekhak were sent to judicial custody for five days by the Kathmandu District Court Sunday. He is currently undergoing medical treatment at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj, Kathmandu, as his health conditions deteriorated when he was taken to the hospital Saturday for a health check-up following the arrest. He will remain in the hospital during his five-day custody. In another development, Nepal's Department of Money Laundering Investigation (DMLI) and Nepal police have intensified probe against former prime ministers Sher Bahadur Deuba, KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal after the arrest of a former minister Deepak Khadka.

Before upgrading the case to a detailed investigation, the department had conducted preliminary enquiries for nearly six months, The Kathmandu Post reported. Former energy minister and Nepali Congress leader Deepak Khadka, arrested Sunday in connection with a money laundering case, was admitted to Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj Monday after complaining of health problems.

Ukraine's drone masters eye Iran war to kickstart export ambitions

Indeed, Ukraine has signed framework cooperation deals with Saudi Arabia and Qatar in recent days, and has said one is in the works with the United Arab Emirates.

Zelenskiy has stressed that arms sales must be decided at the government level, warning businesses against engaging with clients directly.

Ukraine's drone sector is chomping at the bit. "Everybody is sitting and waiting," said Oleg Rogynskyy, CEO of UForce, a UK-headquartered Ukrainian military tech company which says its Magura sea drone has been the subject of intense commercial interest from the Middle East.

Several industry figures said the US-Israeli war with Iran had underlined the potency of attack drones in modern warfare and exposed many coun-

tries' vulnerabilities to their threat. The conflict, some added, presented Ukraine with a unique opportunity to jumpstart exports and create a world-leading industry that could provide



the backbone for post-war reconstruction and prosperity. Wild Hornets and SkyFall, two other top Ukrainian interceptor drone makers, said they too had received inquiries from Middle Eastern countries but

- Ukraine's interceptor drone technology is in high demand
President Zelenskiy tours Gulf to strike defence deals
Drone makers are keen to seize on the moment of Iran war
Some industry figures say that Kyiv has moved too slowly
Ukraine has ambitions of becoming a major arms exporter

like UForce were not directly negotiating contracts before getting a green light from Kyiv.

Anastasiia Mishkina, executive director at Tech Force in UA, an association of nearly 100 Ukrainian defence companies, said some members had asked the government for permission to export and were waiting for a response.

"There is a risk of losing the moment because the interna-

tional market does not wait," she said.

SEA DRONES MOUNTED WITH INTERCEPTORS

Ukraine has developed its technology and expertise over years of countering Russia's drone attacks - a threat that Gulf states now face from Iran's relatively cheap Shahed drones.

Hundreds of Russian drones are often fired at Ukraine in a single night, spurring an innovation race with the military and private firms developing interceptor drones to bring enemy craft down before they hit their targets.

These interceptors cost a few thousand dollars each, although they do not always succeed and Russia is constantly coming up with ways to get past them.

CHINA RESUMES DIRECT FLIGHTS TO NK AFTER 6 YEARS

China's flag carrier resumed direct flights between Beijing and North Korea's capital of Pyongyang Monday not long after the restoration of passenger train services between the capitals. The Air China flight was welcomed by the Chinese ambassador to North Korea, Wang Yajun, and other diplomats



UN peacekeeper killed in Lebanon as Israeli strikes pummel south

Beirut, March 30: A United Nations peacekeeper was killed in southern Lebanon overnight, prompting condemnation Monday after a bloody weekend in which Lebanese journalists and medics were killed in Israeli strikes.

The peacekeeper from Indonesia was the first from the UN's peacekeeping force, known as UNIFIL, to be killed in the new war between Israel and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah which erupted March 2.

UNIFIL said the peacekeeper was killed when a projectile exploded at one of its positions near the southern Lebanese village of Adchit al-Qusayr Sunday. Another peacekeeper was critically injured.

"We do not know the origin of the projectile. We have launched an investigation to determine all of the circumstances," UNIFIL said.

Indonesia's foreign ministry said Monday the deceased peacekeeper was one of its citizens and that three others were injured by "indirect artillery fire" in the vicinity of the Indonesian UNIFIL contingent's position near Adchit al-Qusayr.

Indonesia condemned the incident and said any harm to peacekeepers is unacceptable, while reiterating its condemnation "of Israel's attacks in Southern Lebanon."



As workdays are getting increasingly busier and personal time is becoming more valuable, we recognise a growing need to make vehicle servicing even more convenient and accessible to customers

HISASHI TAKEUCHI | MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA MD & CEO

## SILVER UP ₹7,000, GOLD RISES ₹3,700

Precious metal prices rebounded by about 3 per cent in the national capital Monday, with silver jumping by ₹7,000 to ₹2.37 lakh per kilogram, and gold advanced to ₹1.51 lakh per 10 grams on the back of fresh buying by jewellers ahead of the wedding season.



### of the day quote

Safety is an integral part of Kia's product philosophy as we continue our journey towards becoming one of the most trusted mobility brands in India



GWANGGU LEE | KIA INDIA MD & CEO

Supply chains are being closely monitored, supported by trade facilitation measures and coordinated inter-ministerial action. These measures are aimed at mitigating external risks, supporting the balance of payments, and maintaining macroeconomic stability



PANKAJ CHAUDHARY | MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

Being certified as a Great Place to Work is a proud moment for all of us. This recognition reflects our unwavering commitment to building a culture where our people feel valued, empowered and inspired to do their best work every day



NAVANEEL KAR | MD, PHILIP MORRIS INDIA

## Rupee tumbles 9.88% in FY26; biggest annual decline in 14 yrs



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 30:** The Indian rupee depreciated 9.88 per cent against the US dollar in FY26, marking the sharpest decline against the greenback in 14 years.

In FY12, the domestic currency declined by 12.4 per cent against the dollar at a time when the current account deficit had widened to 4.2 per cent.

In the current fiscal year, the steep depreciation was driven by persistent foreign fund outflows, elevated crude oil prices, and a strengthening dollar globally. Volatility in global financial markets and tightening liquidity conditions further weighed on the rupee in FY26.

Other Asian currencies have also seen a sharp depreciation against the US dollar, with Japanese Yen falling by 6 per cent, Philippine Peso by 5.74 per cent, and South Korean Won by 2.88 per cent since April 1, according to market participants.

South Korean lender Shinhan Bank's head of treasury in India, Sunal Sodhani, said FY26 was a "perfect storm" of external shocks, capital outflows and structural vulnerabilities, and added that the factors leading to the influence in FY26 are different from those in FY12.

"Unlike FY12 (which was more domestic plus taper tan-

### In the current fiscal year, the steep depreciation was driven by persistent foreign fund outflows, elevated crude oil prices, and a strengthening dollar

trum-led), FY26 depreciation is externally driven by oil, geopolitics, capital flight, and amplified by India's import dependence," Sodhani said.

The initial depreciation of the currency in FY26 was triggered after the US imposed tariffs on India, which led to a sharp surge in demand for dollars.

The situation was further worsened by the conflict in West Asia, which pushed crude oil prices significantly higher, intensifying pressure on the rupee.

The tariffs also mounted pressure on domestic equities and debt markets, leading to sustained foreign capital outflows. Since then, the rupee has been hitting successive record lows, slipping to an all-time low of 95 against the US dollar, despite the Reserve Bank of India's intervention in the foreign exchange market.

To support currency, the central bank has sold USD 55.073 billion in the spot market till January in FY26.

The RBI has announced a regulatory measure aimed at curbing excessive speculation to address the currency's fall.

On Friday, the RBI said banks can hold only up to USD 100 million in net open positions in the onshore currency market at the end of each trading day. The rule, effective April 10, will force lenders to reduce these positions and limit their ability to take large, one-sided bets against the rupee.

This move by the central bank helped the currency to appreciate sharply in the morning trade on Monday, but most of the gains were reversed due to heavy demand for the dollar from oil market companies, market participants said.

The currency breached the psychological mark of 95 against the greenback intra-day, but pared all losses to close 7 paise higher at 94.78 against the dollar.

Forex traders said the USD/INR pair witnessed high volatility and swung 165 paise during intra-day trade as the West Asia crisis entered its 31st day, keeping energy markets nervous.

"Rupee rose, but again fell due to some big corporate buying, squaring up of position in NDF, Nationalised banks buying and oil companies buying," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, head of treasury and executive director at Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP.

Experts believe that the local currency may trade in the range of 92-97 against the US dollar.

"Outlook depends on three variables: oil, flows, and global rates. The new normal is higher volatility plus gradual depreciation, not stability around a fixed band. In FY27, for the USD/INR pair, 92-97 remains the broader range play," Sodhani added.

## Stock markets slump over 2%, end FY26 with losses



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 30:** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended the last trading session of the 2025-26 fiscal year sharply lower Monday as the ongoing war in West Asia and surging crude oil prices kept investors' sentiment fragile.

Weak trends in Asian markets and unabated foreign fund outflows also added to the bearish trend in domestic equities.

Declining for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,635.67 points or 2.22 per cent to settle at 71,947.55. During the day, it plunged 1,809.09 points or 2.45 per cent to 71,774.13.

A total of 3,563 stocks declined, while 876 advanced and 154 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty slumped 488.20 points or 2.14 per cent to end at 22,331.40.

"The downturn was primarily driven by escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, which dashed hopes of de-escalation and pushed crude oil prices higher, raising concerns over inflation and macro stability for oil-importing economies like India.

"Weak global cues, including declines across Asian and US markets, coupled with continued foreign institutional outflows and a weakening rupee, further weighed on sentiment," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, State Bank of India, InterGlobe Aviation, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank and Kotak

Mahindra Bank were among the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra and Power Grid were the gainers. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.18 per cent to USD 115.1 per barrel.

In the last two trading sessions, the BSE benchmark Sensex has lost 3,325.9 points, or 4.41 per cent, and the Nifty dived 975.05 points, or 4.18 per cent.

In the 2025-26 financial year, the BSE benchmark plunged 5,467.37 points, or 7 per cent, and the Nifty dropped 1,187.95 points, or 5 per cent.

The BSE MidCap Select index lost 3.13 per cent, and the Small-Cap Select index declined 2.14 per cent. The BSE PSU Bank tanked 4.60 per cent, MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (3.96 per cent), Bankex (3.80 per cent), Financial Services (3.46 per cent), Private Banks (3.43 per cent), BSE Top 10 Banks (3.40 per cent), Telecommunication (3.09 per cent) and Realty (3.03 per cent).

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225 index plunged nearly 3 per cent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index also settled lower, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index ended in positive territory.

"Indian equities extended their decline, with benchmark indices falling over 2 per cent, underscoring a deepening sell-off sentiment driven by persistent global uncertainties and rising crude oil prices," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

## IIP growth steady at 5.2% in February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** India's industrial production grew 5.2 per cent in February, mainly due to an improvement in manufacturing output, according to official data released Monday.

The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), expanded by 2.7 per cent in February 2025, an official statement said.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) revised the industrial production growth for January 2026 to 5.1 per cent from the provisional estimate of 4.8 per cent released earlier this month.

NSO data further showed that the manufacturing sector's output growth accelerated to 6 per cent in February 2026 compared to 2.8 per cent in the year-ago month.

Mining production growth slightly improved to 3.1 per cent compared to 1.6 per cent recorded a year ago.

Power generation growth stood at 2.3 per cent in February compared to 3.6 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.



During the April-February period of FY26, the country's industrial production growth remained flat year-on-year at 4.1 per cent.

Within the manufacturing sector, 14 out of 23 industry groups have recorded a positive growth in February 2026 compared to a year ago.

The top three positive contributors for February 2026 are Manufacture of basic metals (13.2 per cent), Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (14.9 per cent) and Manufacture of machinery and equipment (10.2 per cent).

The corresponding growth rates of IIP, as per use-based classification in February 2026 over February 2025, are 1.8 per cent in Primary goods, 12.5 per cent in Capital goods, 7.7 per cent in Intermediate goods, 11.2 per cent in Infrastructure/ Construction Goods, 7.3 per cent in Consumer durables and (-) 0.6 per cent in Consumer non-durables.

In the industry group 'Manufacture of basic metals', item groups 'MS slabs', 'Flat products of Alloy Steel' and 'Pipes and tubes of Steel' have shown significant contribution to growth.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Head - Research & Outreach, Icria, said, "ICRA expects the IIP growth to decelerate to 3-4 per cent in March 2026, amid the unfolding adverse impact of the West Asia crisis on some manufacturing segments, both through the price and availability channels, as well as weaker electricity performance in the month".

## Interest rates on small savings schemes remain unchanged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** The government Monday left interest rates unchanged for various small savings schemes, including PPF and NSC, for the eighth straight quarter, beginning April 1, 2026.

"The rates of interest on various Small Savings Schemes for the first quarter of FY 2026-27, starting from April 1, 2026, and ending on June 30, 2026, shall remain unchanged from those notified for the fourth quarter (January 1, 2026 to March 31, 2026) of FY 2025-26," the finance ministry said in a notification.

As per the notification, deposits under the Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme will attract an interest rate of 8.2 per cent, while the rate on a three-year term deposit remains at 7.1 per cent prevailing in the current quarter.

The interest rates for popular Public Provident Fund (PPF) and post office savings deposit schemes have been retained at



7.1 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively. The interest rate on the Kisan Vikas Patra will be 7.5 per cent, and the investments will mature in 115 months.

The interest rate on the National Savings Certificate (NSC) will stay at 7.7 per cent for the April-June quarter.

Like the current quarter, the monthly income scheme will earn 7.4 per cent for investors during the first quarter of the next fiscal. With this, the interest rates on small savings schemes, mainly operated by post offices and banks, have been left unchanged for the eighth consecutive quarter.

## INDIA BONDS PLUNGE IN WORST FISCAL SINCE 2023

REUTERS

**Mumbai, March 30:** Indian bonds tumbled in the fiscal year ending March, snapping a two-year rising streak, as demand weakened and the Middle East war sent oil prices surging, outweighing the impact of record debt purchases and cash infusion by the central bank.

Elevated oil prices threaten to raise inflation and widen India's current account deficit, and could force the central bank to start raising policy rates earlier than anticipated.

Bonds could extend their losing run in the weeks ahead, with no end to the war in sight, which will worsen the inflation and growth outlook for the world's third-largest crude oil importer.

The yield on the 10-year benchmark government 6.48% 2035 bond ended at 7.0345% Monday, the last working day of the fiscal, after ending at 6.9419% in the previous



session. Bond yields move inversely to prices.

The yield jumped 37 basis points in March, the most since February 2017, taking its rise for the full year to 45 bps, the first and the biggest rise since fiscal 2023.

"End of rate cut cycle dynamics have continued to be the key driver of yields since June, even as RBI still eased some more and conducted aggressive OMO purchases," Abhishek Upadhyay, senior economist at ICICI Securities Primary Dealership, said.

## India's fiscal deficit at 80.4% of FY26 budget target till Feb: CGA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 30:** The central government's fiscal deficit stood at ₹12.52 lakh crore at the end of February, or 80.4 per cent of the annual budget target for 2025-26 compared to 85.8 per cent in the year-ago period, according to government data released Monday.

The Centre estimates the fiscal deficit (the gap between expenditure and revenue) during 2025-26 at 4.4 per cent of GDP, or ₹15.58 lakh crore.

According to monthly accounts released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), the Centre's total receipts stood

at ₹27.91 lakh crore, or 82 per cent of the budget target by February-end 2026.

The receipts included ₹21.45 lakh crore tax revenue (net) and ₹5.8 lakh crore non-tax revenue.

CGA said ₹12.66 lakh crore was transferred to state governments as devolution of share of taxes by the Centre during the period, which is ₹85,837 crore higher than the previous year.

CGA data showed that the central government's total expenditure during April-February 2025-26 stood at ₹40.44 lakh crore, or 81.5 per cent of the full



financial year budget target. Of the total expenditure, ₹31.15 lakh crore was on revenue ac-

count and ₹9.29 lakh crore was on capital account.

Out of the total revenue ex-

penditure, ₹10.65 lakh crore went towards interest payments and ₹3.89 lakh crore towards major subsidies.

Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, ICRA chief economist said the Government of India's fiscal deficit narrowed to ₹12.5 lakh crore or 80.4 per cent of the 2025-26 revised budget estimates from ₹13.5 lakh crore in the year ago period, led by a lower revenue deficit, even as capex was 15 per cent higher.

She also said the cut in excise duty on fuels is expected to result in a revenue loss of about ₹1-1.2 lakh crore in

FY2027, equivalent to about 30 basis points as a proportion of GDP.

However, this is likely to be partly offset by the amount allocated towards the Economic Stabilisation Fund (ESF), she said.

"Nevertheless, the West Asia crisis has complicated the GoI's budget math for FY2027, raising material risks on the expenditure and revenue side, especially if the conflict persists for a prolonged period, keeping crude oil and natural gas prices elevated, beyond our current baseline forecasts," Nayar added.

# Sheetal crowned 'Para Archer of the Year'

**SHORT TAKES**

## India shines at World Junior Wushu C'ships

**Tianjin City (China):** The Indian Wushu team delivered a historic performance at the 10th World Junior Wushu Championship, bagging a haul of nine medals, including three gold. Apart from the three gold, Indian players clinched two silvers and four bronze medals. Indian athletes displayed high-level technique, confidence, and exceptional sportsmanship in their finals bouts. India particularly dominated in the Sanda (fighting) events with Thangam Upendro (Boys 45 kg), Nongmaithem Pamheiba (Junior Boys 52kg), and Loitongbam Victor (Youth Boys 52kg) winning the gold. Yuvraj clinched the 48 kg Youth silver, while Gautam Mankas (48 kg Junior) and Anu (48 kg Youth) bagged bronze medals. In the Taolu (artistic) events, Rajkumari Lanchenbi Chanu (Changquan Girls) won the bronze while Konthoujam Devikarani Devi fetched herself a silver and a bronze.

only female armless archer to win gold at the World Para Archery Championships by claiming the top honours in the women's compound individual event in Gwangju, South Korea last year.

Born without arms, Sheetal skillfully uses her feet, legs, and shoulder to draw the bow and shoot. She also secured a complete set of medals at the World Championships, winning the women's team silver and mixed team bronze.

"India's Sheetal Devi took the honour in the para archer of the year category after another breakthrough season that included a world title in Gwangju," said World Archery.

Beyond her World Championship gold, Sheetal also boasts



**GLORY THROUGH GRIT**

of a Paris Paralympics bronze in the mixed team event, along with individual silvers from the 2022 Asian Para Games and the

2023 Asian Championships in Bangkok.

"Nominated alongside the best para archers in the world...

**Nominated alongside the best para archers in the world... and now named the best para archer by World Archery - this one feels deeply personal. A heart filled with gratitude, with emotion, with everything this journey has held. Thank you**

**Sheetal Devi**

and now named the best para archer by World Archery - this one feels deeply personal. A heart filled with gratitude, with emotion, with everything this journey has held. Thank you," Sheetal, who is also an Arjuna awardee, posted on 'X' Monday.

"The 2025 World Archery Awards honour the season's most exceptional athletes and officials for their excellence, fair play and dedication to the sport," it added.

The awards, launched in 2011, honour excellence and outstanding contributions to the sport, celebrating the athletes and support staff who have defined the international archery season.

This year, the awards were presented across eight categories, including 'Archer of the Year,' which went to Emircan Haney of Turkey; 'Young Archer of the Year,' awarded to Baptiste Addis of France; and 'Best Team of the Year,' claimed by Korea's recurve men's team.

## INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

# Roaring start for Royals

Sooryavanshi's fiery fifty, bowlers power RR to thumping eight-wicket win over CSK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 30:** Indian batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi smashed a 15-ball half-century after an impressive show from the bowlers, setting up an emphatic eight-wicket win for Rajasthan Royals in their IPL opener against a sluggish Chennai Super Kings here Monday.

Royals made good use of the overhead conditions to bowl out Chennai Super Kings for 127.

It was a forgettable batting performance for CSK, who were put in to bat by Riyan Parag on a pitch that had been under cover for a while due to rain.

The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi has made massive strides in his career since his record hundred in the IPL last season. His rare talent was on full display against a hapless CSK attack.

With Sooryavanshi going ballistic from his end, his opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal was happy to give the strike back to the fellow left-hander. Royals raced to victory in 12.1 overs.

The result was a foregone conclusion after Sooryavanshi enjoyed an 18-run over. He was dropped by Kartik Sharma in that same over and duly made CSK pay heavily for that error.

Some of his awe inducing strokes included a six over point off a slower ball from New Zealand pacer Matt Henry.

Sooryavanshi became the third fastest to an IPL fifty with a couple of sixes off spinner Noor Ahmad.

Following his fall, Jaiswal (38 not out off 36) and Riyan Parag (14 not out off 11) completed the formalities for Royals with plenty to spare.

While the home team ticked all boxes, CSK looked completely out of sorts in their opener and will need to go back to the drawing board.

Both CSK and the Royals, the two bottom placed teams last season, had traded their star players Ravindra Jadeja and Sanju Samson ahead of the season.

It was a successful return



to the Royals for Jadeja, who struck twice in his opening over.

Samson, star of India's T20 World Cup triumph, could not fire on his CSK debut. In an attempt to dispatch Nandre Burger over mid-wicket, he saw his off-stump getting dis-

lodged with a sharp delivery that seamed away.

Both Nandre and Jofra Archer got the ball to talk in the powerplay.

After Nandre got rid of Samson, Archer sent back CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad who backed away to go for an aerial

stroke on the off-side only to see his stumps rattled.

Burger was on a hat-trick in the second over after surprising Ayush Mhatre with a bouncer that kissed the batter's gloves on way to the keeper.

Jadeja was introduced in the eighth over. He trapped Sarfaraz Khan (17 off 12) in front with the latter missing a slog sweep while another Indian World Cup star Shivam Dube (6 off 4) failed to clear long-off four balls later, leaving CSK at 57-6 in eight overs.

CSK could not find a way back from thereon despite a handy effort from Jamie Overton (43 off 36).

Royals' medium pacer Brijesh Sharma dismissed Kartik Sharma on his debut.

Archer, Burger and Jadeja ended with couple of wickets each.

### Brief Scores:

**Chennai Super Kings:** 127 all out in 19.4 overs (Jamie Overton 43; Jofra Archer 2/19, Nandre Burger 2/27, Ravindra Jadeja 2/18.) lose to **Rajasthan Royals:** 128 for 2 in 12.1 overs (Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 52, Yashasvi Jaiswal 38 not out; Anshul Kamboj 2/27) by 8 wickets

### Overlooked Gill, Iyer eye redemption in GT vs PBKS

Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer, two India T20I batters who have often been overlooked, will captain Gujarat Titans and Punjab Kings respectively, each eager to make a statement in a high-stakes Indian Premier League opener here Tuesday. India's Test and ODI captain Gill, who was named T20I vice-captain but later left out of the World Cup squad to accommodate Sanju Samson, has a lot to answer in the shortest format. While India went on to win a record third ICC T20 World Cup, Gill enters this season at a crucial phase in his T20 career. Having won the title in their debut season in 2022, Gujarat Titans have remained one of the most consistent sides, finishing third last year before losing to Mumbai Indians in the Eliminator. They look one of the most settled units again, retaining 20 players. The opening pair of Gill and Sai Sudharsan -- last season's top scorer with 759 runs -- remains their biggest strength.

## MIAMI OPEN

The Italian becomes first man since Roger Federer to win Indian Wells and Miami in the same season

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Miami, March 30:** Jannik Sinner defeated Jiri Lehecka 6-4, 6-4 to win the Miami Open and complete the 'Sunshine Double'.

The Italian defeated Jiri Lehecka 6-4, 6-4 in the final to become the first male since Roger Federer in 2017 to win Indian Wells and Miami in the same season. Moreover, Sinner is the first player to achieve the feat without dropping a set across the two events.

The 24-year-old won Indian Wells for the first time in his career and became the eighth different male player to win the 'Sunshine Double'. Novak Djokovic and Federer have completed the feat on multiple occasions.

Eight different men who have

# Sinner marks record Sunshine Double

completed the Sunshine Double at least once: Jim Courier (1991), Michael Chang (1992), Pete Sampras (1994), Marcelo Rios (1998), Andre Agassi (2001), Roger Federer (2005-06) and Novak Djokovic (2011, 2014-16).

"Double for the first time, it's incredible," Sinner said in his on-court interview. "It's something I never would've thought [to win] because it's difficult to achieve. We made it somehow, so I'm very happy."

Sinner also extended his record to 34 consecutive sets won at ATP Masters 1000 level, dating back to the start of last year's Paris Masters. He improved to 19-2 this season, according to

**It's something I never would've thought [to win] because it's difficult to achieve. We made it somehow, so I'm very happy**

**JANNIK SINNER**



the Sunshine Double in the same year.

A seven-time ATP Masters 1000 champion, Sinner now

trails World No 1 Carlos Alcaraz by 1,190 points in the ATP Live Rankings after making a statement this month.

## Siniakova-Townsend triumph

American Taylor Townsend and Czechian Katerina Siniakova topped seeded Italians Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini, 7-6 (0), 6-1 on the Miami Open women's doubles final to become the first pair to complete the Sunshine Double since Elise Mertens and Aryna Sabalenka achieved the feat in 2019.

The duo also became the sixth woman's doubles team to complete the Sunshine Double. Moreover, Townsend and Siniakova won their fifth title together, including two Grand Slams (2024 Wimbledon and 2025 Australian Open). During the trophy presentation, Siniakova expressed her gratitude for Townsend. "Thank you so much for playing. It's a pleasure to kind of (get to know) you more. So thank you for playing with me and making it fun. I'm really enjoying this time with you," she said.

